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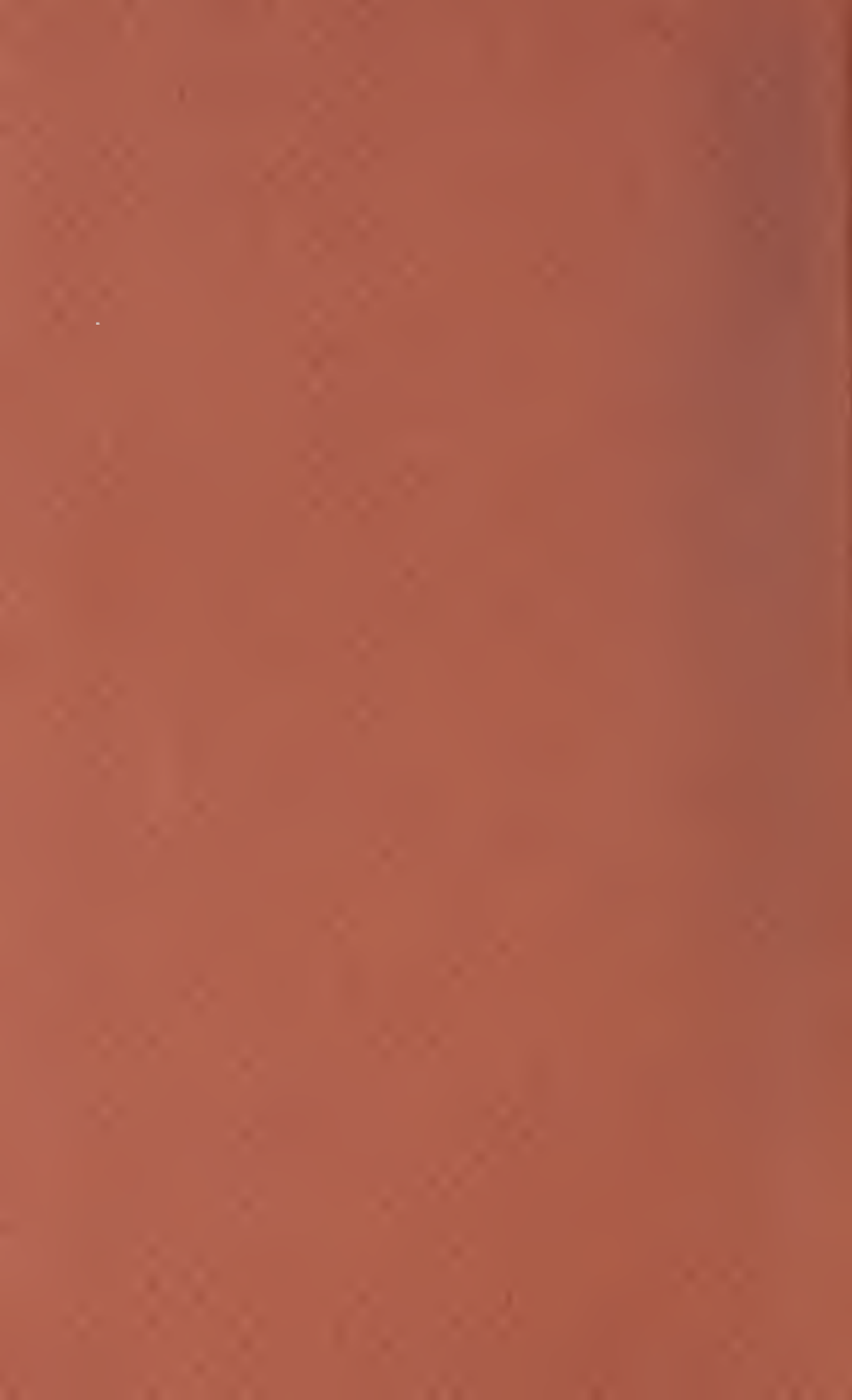
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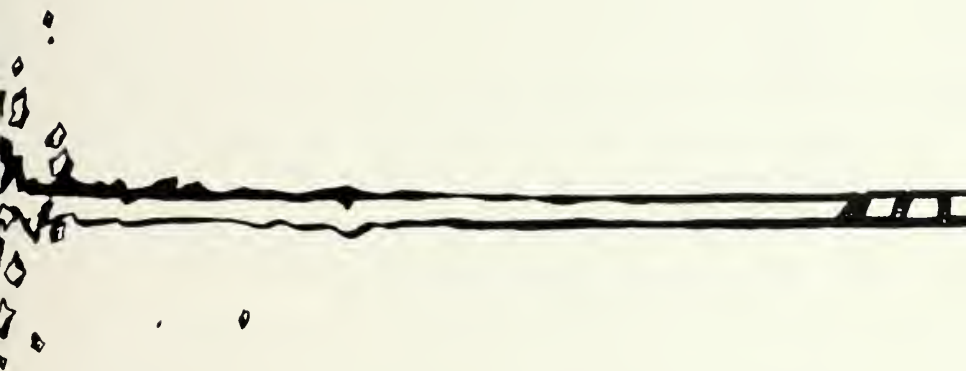
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THE ARCHIVE



THE ARCHIVE

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The Archive

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The Camel Drinks Under a Yellow Moon

But who will come to watch?
Not a priest, not a prince
in his flowing robes
of white cloth.

Not the sleepy desert animals
meekly folded against the breasts
of mamas with long curved bodies,
eyes golden and green.

Not even the bold cacti
born angry and proud,
who are strong-willed
and sharp-tongued
and seek only the power
to grow.

The camel raises his head
under a yellow moon,
and draws inside a curled tongue
sparkled with drops like diamonds
that only a few stars
have shared.

Raisin Horn

The Hemlocks

We knelt,
heads hidden like sea turtles,
in slender, dark corridors
to practice stillness.

As air raid sirens drummed
through our ears, two nuns stood
like folded birds.
Bruised fingers counted beads;
heads nodded, a clock run-down.

There, presiding
over two rows of children
muted by starched blue uniforms,
each nun extended her arms
as if drawing us under
a great shade.

Raisin Horn

Night Ride on the CTA

They slump in the hollow of three a.m.
 The conductor sags in starched creased blue,
 the drunk at the back stares through his pane,
 the lady before him's asleep.
 The driver drops a crumpled ticket. It bounces
 amongst old papers, startled bugs, the trash
 that melts the squareness of their box.

The drunk at the back lifts up his head
 and sees the sleeper's hair, gold-red. He
 pats it with a greasy paw. It sways. He
 draws big-knuckled hands through it. It parts
 like rain.

Each hair feels live, and vulnerable to touch.
 He wiggles nose in gossamer, peers
 within the parted curtain, sees
 dead faces now grown young, a priest
 kissing his stole, a child
 laughing with spittled lips, cackling, sighing,
 he leans back in drunk delight and sings,

"I had a horse, it flew up high,
 it flew away in endless sky.
 Why did it go? Don't ask me why,
 I only know--"

She wakes, and moves away.

Karla Jennings

A Portuguese Float

"Do you know how I stay under water so long?"

"No, how?"

"Simple. After I blow bubbles I pop them and breathe the air back out of them."

"Really?"

"Sure. That way I can dive down probably fifty-seven feet without breathing."

"Really?"

"Sure. Way down deep like that the fish have never seen people before. They aren't scared so they swim right up to you and you can poke 'em."

"Really?"

"Yeah. And if it's a blowfish it'll puff up so it can't swim away, and you can tickle it and it'll roll its eyes around."

"Come on."

"Sure. They have big red eyes with yellow dots in the centers."

"But Sister Frances taught us that bubbles are made out of carbon-dioxide which you can't breathe."

A basic problem, as I recall, with a brother only a year and a half younger, is that you are constantly called upon to elucidate. "That's right," I said. "Some bubbles are made out of carbon-dioxide—those over the blue ones. The clear ones are made out of oxygen."

"I don't believe you."

"So why do you think the sky's blue?"

"I don't know."

"Because it's made out of carbon-dioxide. That's why they fill up airplanes with oxygen before they take off. Because when you get out of the clear into the blue you can't breathe anymore."

"Really?"

"Sure. Carbon-dioxide is always blue."

We walked along the sandbars which extended out a hundred yards from where the shore used to be. Summer always brought extreme tides. Only long flat puddles remained, edged in white froth. A breeze might send globs of the foam skating across the surface of a puddle, then tumbling over ridges in the sand on the other side. Everywhere the sand was carved into ridges in some immensely futile effort. It was thick wet sand that held to our feet and made a sucking noise as we walked.

"I don't believe you about the bubbles," he said.

"I know."

At eleven he had already grown an inch taller than I, and was skinny enough that his navel stuck out in a tight knot. Even when he pressed it in it popped out again a second later. We were born pigeon-toed and were made (by my vainglorious father and his experimenting orthopedic acquaintance) to wear corrective braces to sleep. They consisted of short white boots attached to a metal bar so that they angled out, and were uncomfortable enough to keep us thrashing about until we fell asleep. But only Glen's right foot emended itself; his left foot remained facing slightly inward as did his knees. And although he looked rather rickety as he walked along next to me, he was as genetically endowed with precision as a praying mantis.

"One time I asked Prince if black people farted like white people." Prince Williams was in my class and we regularly dropped him home—at the Red Star Bar—in Williams' town after school.

"What?" Glen asked.

"Once I asked Prince if he farted like white people."

"Didn't you know?"

"Of course I knew. I guess I just wanted to make sure. But you know what?" I asked.

"What?"

"Then he asked me if white people go to the bathroom."

"And you probably told him no."

"Of course not. It was just weird, that's all. I mean the way we thought about each other."

"Sounds pretty gross to me."

We had become quite bored with Deep Water Cay, having spent three summers and too many weekends there. The drive to East End was only forty-five miles, but it took two and a half hours. There were places like Rocky Creek and spots along the Beach Road where everyone but the driver had to get out of the car because of holes in the road. There was a grave-yard outside McClean's Town with benches that my father said were for ghosts to sit on. Sometimes we stopped to see what plates of food and cups and saucers had been left by the people for their departed relatives. I once stole a spoon but my father made me return it on the next trip because he said that if you ever stole anything from a dead person he would come back at night and pull on your toes.

After driving the length of the road, we came to a cleared lot which looked across half a mile of inlet to Deep Water Cay, so named—we decided—because the water in the area was always too shallow. We blew our horn so that someone over on the island might hear it and come over in a whaler and carry us across. Most of the time there was no one to hear us; so we waited while my father drove back to McCleans Town to get Audley, who would come in his

Abaco dinghy.

Ours was one of three private homes on the island. We never met the owners of the others. They were the only buildings besides the few associated with the club. Our cottage was small and grey, and it sat on a short hill looking out to sea. We had the only television antenna on the island because my father enjoyed white fuzz, which was all we could pick up that far away. A path of flat coral stones led from the beach with a row of faded conch shells on either side. There were several furry casuarianas that my father had planted as seedlings when we bought the house and when he painted the hurricane shutters fire-engine-red.

The island was three miles long and existed as a bone-fishing camp during the winter when Mr. Nelson, the owner, and his son came over from West Palm Beach to operate it. Then the invariably overweight sportsmen from Connecticut could come and pay two hundred dollars a day for a cot in a room full of sandflies, and a whaler at seven each morning with a light spinning rod, a packet of frozen shrimp, a peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich, and an already drunk native guide (especially if he happened to be Almond or Q-bell). The fishermen would be taken out to the flats behind Sweetings and Lightborne where they would be poled around by their guide (outboards made too much noise) until they found a few hopeless bonefish feeding on one of the banks. And if they could cast their frozen shrimp accurately enough, they could fight one of the small silver fish for fifteen minutes; and the guide could net it and throw it back in because, as far as the fat fishermen had heard, the fish were too bony to eat. They were sportsmen and they were supposed to do things like that.

But there weren't even any funny Connecticut people to look at during the summer. No white round women with hibiscusses printed on their bathing suits which were mini-skirts with ruffles on the edges, and who wore fluorescent green bathing caps, but only went into the water up to their knees because they were afraid of barracudas, and who said *conch* instead of *conk*. There was only our family during the summer. We came then because we didn't like the cold water during the winter, because we didn't like bonefish, and because, I suppose, we didn't like people.

"I heard Uncle Charlie grew breasts when his wife got pregnant."

"You heard what?" Glen asked.

"That Uncle Charlie grew breasts when his wife got pregnant."

"That's impossible. Who told you that?"

"I heard Dad talking about it. He said sometimes men got so emotional when their wives get pregnant that even their stomachs swell up. So I guess he was lucky to get tits."

"Look, there's one of those sucker things." He pointed to the animal (some type of anenome), and we crouched around it. All of it was buried except its

mouth which was round and flat and about two inches across with a flower pattern printed in loose fleshy warts. "You poke it," he said.

"For it to squirt on me? Use a stick or something."

He picked up a sand dollar and touched it to the hole in the center of the flower. The animal expelled a tiny jet of water; then disappeared, pulling itself into the sand as it shrank. The two of us immediately began digging, throwing wet sand out between our legs, until we had a hole two feet deep and had given up trying to find where the animal had disappeared to. We never did find any of them.

Glen started towards the water. He spun the sand dollar through the air like a frisbee. It flew flat for a second, fluttered, then turned on its back and crashed. "Let's clean this sand off," he said.

"Did you know you can clean shoes with Lemon Pledge?" I asked.

"I never really cared."

"It works just as well as polish because I used Lemon Pledge once, and Mom couldn't tell the difference."

The tide had come up quite a bit, so we walked only a short distance before we could squat in waist deep water. The late afternoon sun was not intense, and we shivered for a second.

"What happened this morning?" he asked.

"You mean Dad didn't tell you?"

"He just said there isn't a boat we've owned that you haven't busted."

I was angry again. "He tried to hit me over the head with a board," I said.

"He wouldn't have hit you."

"Yeah he would have. You should have seen his face."

"So you've been sitting under that tree the whole day until I came up?"

"Pretty much . . ." We were quiet for a while, and I stared out at the flat sea.

"Let's go," I said and we continued to walk down the beach.

"So what happened with the boat?" he asked again.

"You know that stupid surveying marker Dad told me to make a mooring out of?" It was a clump of concrete that weighed about thirty-five pounds and had a steel bar through the middle of it. The concrete would have been sunk below the ground and a ribbon attached to the bar if the marker were to serve its purpose.

"Yeah," he answered.

"Well, it came unburied during the storm; and the waves were pushing the boat up on the beach. So he told me to come out with him and push the boat out further. And of course he made me pick up the concrete thing and he told me not to drop it in the boat. But the boat was almost swamped by then, and he was yelling at me to hurry up. I could hardly lift the stupid thing, so I rested it on the side of the boat and a wave hit and the marker rolled in, and you know how the metal bar sticks out of the bottom of the clump of concrete a few

inches?"

"Yeah."

"It punched a hole right through the bottom of the boat."

"How come it didn't sink?"

"I guess he stuffed a rag in the hole. All he has to do is get Audley to patch it with some fiberglass . . . Anyway, that's when he tried to hit me with the board over the head and I ran away."

"And you were out in all that lightning?"

"No, I ducked under the Johnsons' balcony till the rain stopped."

We no longer walked on sand; we had reached that point along the shore where long flat rocks stretched out to the water, and we picked our way among them. As we continued the rocks became sculptured and sometimes rose in ten-foot cliffs. There were places in the rocks where pools had been scooped out and where we looked for whelks and bleeding teeth. Some of the pools were large enough for us to sit in. There were all kinds of things washed up by the storm—bottles and crates, heads of dolls, fishnets and rubber boots. There were light bulbs which we threw against the rocks to hear them pop.

I thought of all the stupid things I had done and would always regret. The time I capsized in the Glasshopper (a clear plastic boat we got free with a new car) and all the cacti my father had dug up for the garden floating around and poking me in the ass, and the propeller spinning around in the air and almost decapitating me. And when my father came with Audley to pick me up he wouldn't let me into the boat until I swam around collecting his stupid cacti. The time I speared the rubber boat. The time I drove a golf cart with my parents' clubs into a lake, and of course Glen jumped out before I went in. Even things I couldn't remember but was told I had done, like putting a cake in the washer, eating ants from under my bed, and peeing off the end of the diving board into the Hilton pool.

But I was tired of thinking, as tired of remembering and of feeling angry as the sea was, now exhausted from the storm. We climbed the rocks until we could go no further and then started back.

"Look," I shouted, but he was several paces ahead of me and he had it in his hands in a second. A perfectly round glass ball about two feet in diameter; a Portuguese float. We had never found one before.

"It's mine," I shouted. "I saw it first."

"Says who? I got it, and finders keepers."

"But . . ."

"Come on. Help me wash it off," he said.

"Why the hell should I?" I answered, and he carried the ball down to the water.

We had seen them selling in the tourist shops in Nassau, some for fifty dollars. Usually netting remained weaved around them, but the rope had

probably rotted away from this one. The seal where the glass had been closed, a stamp about the size of a quarter with a crust of the thick glass around it, was visible and marked its authenticity.

I watched him as he walked with it smiling, holding it with two hands against his body, looking like a pregnant woman. It was light green and it shined now like smooth skin. I envied the ball as much as I envied him, thoroughly hated it as much as I hated him being lucky enough to find it. I wanted to smash it against the rocks. Always his luck. As if he refused to outgrow that immunity to the hurts of the world that only very young children possess—to be able to stumble a thousand times and get up again, laughing, scratchless. To be freed from it all on the grounds of innocence.

He was vulnerable in only one place—his chin, and I had taken advantage of the weak spot three separate times. Three times he'd had it stitched on my account.

I remembered the time Stephen hit me in the face with a golf club and split my cheek from my left eye down so that my lip divided completely in two, and a line of front teeth stared through the hole. I was covered in blood and barely conscious; and I remembered Glen—I saw him for the first time—pulling me by the hand, with huge tears rolling down his cheeks and a face as white as death, dragging me for two blocks, screaming for my mother to help.

And I saw him now as he turned to me and smiled saying that we could give the float to my father so he wouldn't be mad anymore; and I watched him as he lifted the ball up over his head and turned around on his toes, a sparkle of light dancing in the hollow of the glass, beautiful. He set it rolling on the sand; and I ran up ahead and gave it a push, and another, and another, and he another; and I heard the reassuring hum of the generator over the silence. It was close now and my father would be waiting. He would have forgotten what he was angry about; and he would say something dumb when I walked in like "Where have you been all day?" and would want me to help him fog the house because he knew how I loved to watch the clouds of insecticide float up among the seagrape leaves. My mother would smile. She had been worried all day and would be barbecuing chicken. I could almost taste it and was really hungry, and it was possible for me to feel perfectly happy for an instant as I ran along with Glen and gave the ball one more shove.

Bob Antoni



Proposals

Grinda's house stands on squat stacks of bricks,
 broad red thin white, broad red thin white,
 the arms of her kitchen clock always nibbling twelve
 like it was good to eat, something good to eat
 and three hawks circle her spruce, so high
 that I don't look to them long, anymore
 not even through these lean windows.
 Just stand here knowing, always surprised to know
 that earthworms tread the sod beneath this waxed wood;
 they go back and forth, I suppose, in the region
 which Grinda's house shades.

These walls, the brown of hen's egg and Grinda,
 her two arms, sausage-like muscle and dark
 knotted in hands, the flurry of a broom handle.
 I once told her I would get out
 the strongest needle and thread I could find
 and sew the straws on the end of that broom
 together she said then what would we have
 besides our dusty floor in a whisper,
 just a strange object closed at both ends.

Sometimes in the afternoon I think that the woodpeckers
 are going to knock until their hearts fall out.
 I think this sometimes, standing in the center of this room
 and see them still thumping and bloody, snagged in the trees
 or on a bed of pine needles landed by a hart's-tongue
 but I never tell Grinda, even when I'm sweeping
 that this is the joke, that she never stands
 long enough in this room's center.

Grinda, you pirate with a garden-patch eye
and a line of sky, the pigs rifle the cabbage.
I'll make the tines sing on the skillet;
I'll light the lamps, lay the cloth.
The vocabulary of a province is small and harmonious;
I'd like to stay in your house and your bed.
You know this joke, you told it to me
the first night you took me down to the stream
which is your property line
you said, we'll be two of four and twenty,
dark and singing.

Robin Johnson

Photograph

June 1960
someone has carefully noted
on the back
in magic marker.
On the other side
we stand before
the rhododendron
a little out of focus
in black and white.
You and I
at three and five
wearing the inevitable, identical danskins.
The camera sees how well
we can smile for our father
but the red marks which
we press onto each other's palms
(so tightly we hold hands)
become nothing
but another shade of gray.
They are still there
those marks
even now that
we appear in color
borderless
with silky finish.

Alison Seevak

Spring, Wisconsin

North, our world
is still cold in the shadows.
The winter-stunned hills
lie low on the purple horizon.
Fifty feet in from shore,
snow fences reel.
Lawns, unwrapped from their bandaging,
peel like old skin.
We shiver in premature cottons,
uncover our heads
in the new sun, surprised
by the earth,
by the width of sidewalks,
gray light at five o'clock.
Against this sky, out on the lake,
the thin bones of an ice-boat sharpen.
We would stay to think about
its seamliness, its certainty,
but birds are crying,
the March winds quarrel us along.

Deborah Pope

Vermeer's "A Woman Weighing Pearls"

Their small, discreet whiteness untumbles
from the cache of ebony and velvet.
Perfect, they turn their small corner
proof against time, against pain.

To one side, a woman, without ornament,
regards them.

She stands as if asleep at the low table,
her hand out to steady the rising swell
of her lustrous belly;

light rims her loose tunic
with one, thin red.

Ivory cloth falls in folds about her face,
her blue robe floating out
over shoulders and hips.

The Day of Judgment endlessly enacts
in the frame behind her.

A shadow, like a hand, shapes itself
in the bend of her head.

Slowly, her graceful fingers suspend
the delicate scale,

her serene, dreaming eyes
gravely considering

this pearl, this child.

Deborah Pope



Tom McLaurin



Tom McLaurin



Tom McLaurin



Tom McLaurin

playing the blind chicken on Goya's easel

has the slim self-conscious redhead
heard a rustle in the distance
glimpsed some tincture of ambivalence
as if he's being watched

he knows the girls are fond enough
their palms are moist and warm
but of his temperamental maker
and their hour on the idle canvas:

round the circle
sway and swoon
favorites of the wooden spoon
round the circle
nine undone
who's the fairest one

Barry George

The Thing We Have in Common

We all know each other here. Everyone knows Louie is a fool, and everyone knows Stella is a flirt. Everyone knows I am disingenuous but it took me years to realize that they all know. I have been too busy collecting people to wonder what they think of me.

Louie knows what he wants. Once I heard him say, "He sits in his office all day reading fortunes." Louie was talking about the mayor. Louie said it without malice, as though it were an indisputable fact proving the incompetence of the mayor, who is regarded as a competent, though malevolent, man.

The mayor had a retarded son and I have been wondering why the mayor is malevolent instead of compassionate. This has been on my mind for months. I have invented reasons for the mayor's malevolence. One is that the mayor became embittered when his wife asked that their son be named after him. I have imagined how the mayor reacted to his wife's request: he thought he was betrayed. He sobbed at her breast and then went to a bar where they called him a Wop. That day he decided to be mayor.

* * *

Stella is a beauty. She has long, thick black hair and she wears big earrings. Oh, very sexy: the long, smooth neck. Her eyebrows meet. Sometimes she plucks them. I have eyebrows that meet at my nose. I used to pluck them, too, so I don't ask Stella about her eyebrows. Also, her teeth are not very good. Also, she gets pimples sometimes. Maybe she doesn't sound very pretty. She is Greek, very dark, very smoothed-skin, very sweet-smelling, sad under all that laughter and joking. She is sad, all right, but in my collection of people, she is in the not-too-deep category. I have been trying to sleep with her for a long time. She told me she would marry me if I were Greek. She comes to visit. She knows she will never find anyone as good as me.

* * *

I drink a lot and have realized that I've been drinking a lot for a number of years. It used to be different. Now I don't have fun when I drink. I pulled the thermostat off the wall, wrecked my car and have been belligerent to women. I am insulted when they don't sleep with me.

* * *

"All you've done since you came here is make enemies," Stella told me. I kicked her out when she said it. It is the kind of comment that can be made to sound stupid when repeated to another person, and I have never acknowledged to anyone that she was at all right. When Stella said it, my

abdomen contracted and I felt my intestines shift, old symptoms that tell me I have made a mistake and have something to fear, for example, the consequences.

* * *

Stella told me that Louie did not speak until he was eight. The first word he said was, "moon." Louie's parents had a place in New Hampshire and that is where he said it. It must have been on an autumn night when the fields were moonlit, when his cheeks were twitching like they always twitch, when he sat between his parents and pointed to the moon; when his parents hugged him.

Louie's been in the hospital. He swallowed a toothpick and it punctured his stomach.

Last weekend, one of Stella's friends told me that she was coming to see Louie.

"Did she say to tell me she's coming?"

"I thought you'd want to know."

Maybe she didn't come.

* * *

Louie would come to see me at work. He didn't say hello, only: "Well, have you heard from a certain Greek girl?" Or, "Heard from our mutual friend, eh?"

I started making jokes about him.

* * *

Stella had a rendezvous with a man the day I kicked her out for telling me all I had done was make enemies, so later on she told me that I did not kick her out and that she was going to leave, anyway. It makes me feel better to say I kicked her out. I rejected her that day. She had her arms around me and drew me to her. I said, "Stop, this isn't honest." I have built my reputation on my honesty, which I use as a down payment.

* * *

I've seen the man who was waiting for Stella, and there was something about his carriage that made me think he loves her, although it may be that I sensed merely the capacity to love. Last year, he drove to Nebraska to see Stella, who told me that he has more patience with Louie than do I. If the man were Greek, she would probably marry him, too.

* * *

Louie walks around town all day. He goes to city hall and sees the mayor.

Louie has a curvature of the spine. His hair is almost gone. His teeth are gone. He has hemorrhoids. Stella told me that Louie walked into Salomon's and asked Eddie Salomon what he had for hemorrhoids. Everyone at the lunch counter laughed, which is what I'd expect them to do. Louie told Eddie that I'm a no-good-son-of-a-bitch because I managed to get a nice girl like Stella to spend the night. You tell me who is the son-of-a-bitch.

Someone who has lived here all his life told me that Louie used to think he was Captain Midnight, and that he used to send away for the women models in the Sears catalogue. There is something in him that is dangerous.

Louie lives at Mrs. Kaczka's. It is the kind of place that makes me think of cancer. The people who live there look as though they have cancer or will get it pretty soon. I counted twelve pictures of Jesus on the walls. I would like to imprison the mayor at Mrs. Kaczka's.

* * *

"How do you know he's so strong?"

"He grabbed me and kissed me is how."

* * *

Stella gets away with flirting because she has nothing to lose. She knows nothing will happen. She is twenty-six, and a virgin. I have fantasies about how Stella will feel after Louie rapes her and she is running home to me.

* * *

I have another fantasy about Stella and Louie: It is late at night, and Louie is walking down the street. With outstretched arms, Stella approaches him. She draws him to her. She looks at him with the most mournful look I've ever seen and then kisses his lips. She gathers his groin into her hand, and tears stream down her cheeks. She walks away, turning back to him every ten or fifteen feet, blowing kisses to him as though she were the heroine in an old, bad movie.

* * *

My dentist's office is around the corner from the place where Stella and Louie meet in my fantasy. The office makes me feel that I am living in the most God-forsaken town. It makes me think about how many small towns there are, and about how many small-town dentists there are. It makes me think of the television program, "Gunsmoke," and how lonely I felt Saturday nights when I watched it and was alone.

Our town was named an All-America City.

* * *

For a long time I have thought about how to get even with the mayor. I have been planning a book about him. I started, but I never got very far because there are too many lies in it. By examining the character of the mayor, I thought, I would show that evil is born of banality.

* * *

This is a squalid, desperate place. When I think about it, I think of a man dressed in a green-and-black flannel shirt, gray trousers that are pleated and an old railroad conductor's hat. He had stubble on his face, and his breath smelled of vomit.

* * *

Two parts of town are especially run-down. One is the West End, and there is a red house on the main street of this part of town. Only black people live in that house. Down the street are some apartments owned by the mayor, who told the newspaper: "My only contact with the tenants is when they send me a check or when I collect the rent myself. As a rule, I just stand at the front door collecting their rent and then ask them if they need anything."

There was no hot water nor bath nor shower in the apartment I photographed. The woman said she lived there for forty-two years.

* * *

When I found out that the mayor ordered the police to bring charges against me for driving under the influence, I began spending more time under the influence. I would go over to a friend's house and his wife would drive me home. At the end of one of these evenings, I got it into my head that she wanted to sleep with me. She wouldn't come inside, and she continues to distrust me. God forgive me my illusions.

* * *

The mayor told me that I could not understand Advent because I am a Jew. It is no secret that the mayor is a Jew-hater, but some of my colleagues said that I induced his Jew-hatred by being flip and wearing natty clothes and a brown fedora.

The last time I came out of my dentist's office, I ran into Louie. Louie told me to watch out for the mayor because he doesn't like Jewish people. Louie was trying to be kind, I think.

* * *

I regarded this town as a promise when I arrived. The idea occurred to me on the last part of the trip when the road follows a river and then climbs into the mountains. I stopped my car and looked around and felt that I loved the river and the mountains because they belonged to me in a special, intimate way.

A mural that says, "Welcome to Sidley, The Tunnel Town," was the first thing I saw when I came here. It's on the side of the Thompson plant where the parking lot is, the place where the workers eat lunch in the summer. Thompson makes sleeping bags and tents for chemical warfare. Israel buys the tents. The mayor owns the controlling interest in Thompson.

* * *

It is impossible for me to love Louie, and I believe that Stella can. I feel as though I have failed him. I go on drinking sprees. I dissimulate. I lie. When I am disappointed by people, particularly those I previously considered honorable, particularly myself, I feel this: a scalding that begins in my lower chest, spreads to my extremities and makes my muscles contract so that I think a white-hot vise is reaching out from the inside and then closing in on me. I don't know why, but no day passes without my thinking about the death camps and about one, in particular, near Riga, where a metronome buried in a

marble vault counts off the seconds. I know there is a world of difference between the persons who ran the death camps and the sycophants and racists of our town—even the mayor, whose workers get sick from the poisonous fumes at Thompson. The thing we have in common is that we are equally capable of hate.

Paul Krause

A Nouveau

The look in the eyes is most important. Look back not in anger, but with cool disinterest; let your eyes glaze over the Ex, and instead, catch the tree beyond, or peruse the ground below. And walk with aggressive self-confidence—arms swinging forward, legs digging divots. Let the new stranger know just from your gait that you do have a pressing appointment: somewhere, you are needed immediately (evidence of a great demand upon you from others is quite effective). Your destination should become the focus of your nose; consequently, the entire angle of the head should be re-aligned: full-forward, slightly upward. No time for the undesirable. Alienate him. Isolate him. But do not dwell on the process. Merely allow the individual to gradually slip from your thoughts so completely the procedure becomes natural, effortless.

Jim Rosenfield

Genuflection in the Afternoon

I empty the garbage twice a day whether it needs it or not. I detest flouride toothpastes and am a firm believer in acne medicines. I am a miser, but lose all respect for those who relate this trait to my religious affiliation. I think I am punctual. I am always late. I question what serious romance is, but I always seem to be on the lookout for one. I never wear the same pair of socks any two days in a row. I am an idealist; I cringe at the thought of peanut butter on bananas. Cheese with apples is okay. My insecurity turns into egotism now and then, and I wash my hair every day with a dandruff shampoo even though I don't have dandruff. I don't know the first thing about existentialism. Palpitation, however, is a favorite word of mine. Mrs. Rosenbloom taught me everything I know about the touch-type method. The rhythm method makes for big Catholic families. I learned the hangnail will not leave unless you trim it; the cat will not answer to its name, the dog will.

Jim Rosenfield



TX 9-77
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Without People

Situation being bad, I risked it. "Oh hell," I muttered and picked the brown scab on my left knee. No one hollered at me. Stuck. The car clunked, died, dumping us at this Pontiac repair place. How could a building rust over? An over-boned dog rolled in the dust, patchy with mange and about 65% ribs. "A two hour wait and behave yourselves," warned Kate's mom. Kate's elbow missed my side, cracked into the wall of the bathroom behind our bench. The loud boom made us jump, and the faded pink door of the ladies' room creaked. Two nostrils fringed with black hairs appeared, then the whole man waltzed out. We stared. A pudgy face, all red like he'd let slip a swear word. Red arms to match, thick as barber poles. But below these checked shorts he let go a pair of the whitest legs I'd ever spotted. The scarce dark hair looked embarrassed to be there. "He glows in the dark," I sputtered to Kate. At the end of his arm hung a kid, a boy I think.

"Kelly, isn't that guy a MAN?" Kate giggled, "He went in the one for ladies."

I grabbed her wrist, pulling a braid (the shorter one) out of her mouth, "This door says Men so let's try it. *He* started this stuff." "Fine day, isn't it Mister?" I called loudly, banging the door shut behind us. The blue men sign flapped. We peeked through a crack. He hoisted the kid in the air, scurried to his Cadillac.

I plunked down on the bench again. Kate balanced on one leg. "Hey Kelly, maybe he's homo or something? Don't they even act queer about bathrooms too?" Kate's the sex one. This year's expert at school. She spies on her sister Maggie, 25, who's studying for marriage with a bottom drawerful of How-To books. Kate's nervy about sex. I'm more for doing things, like flipping out that weird man in the ladies' or tossing toadstools at passing cars.

We moseyed over to this wilted yellow hamburger place, built in 1902 I bet. The flies claimed squatter's rights. Forty of them swooping down, giving up wings and legs to garnish bacon burgers. Kate couldn't eat hers. Even the ice stunk.

"Kelly how can ice taste funny?"

"Chew a piece," I told her, "It's awful, like fly guts froze in it."

The grill guy spattered grease on his shirt as he swatted flies with the meat turner. A big stain on the right pocket made the cloth see-through. Camel Reds and a lighter. "Let's go Kate."

We tramped through an overgrown field towards this abandoned house. The thicker grasses whipped my raw knee and I wished I hadn't picked it open. We circled, hunting a path or a drive. None. Like the house sprouted up on its

own, never catered to real people. Grass gave in to water, becoming a full-fledged pond, the middle all smothered in green slime. I didn't like to look at it. Real aging, like sun-splintered boards, was better than lazy choking like that. I used to think of pond slimes as sores from some water disease people spread. In fourth grade science they told us nature revenges that way, just turns on herself. I guess people aren't the only ones to ruin things.

"Hey Kelly," Kate yelled, "What if they win the Reader's Digest money? How would they know?" We nosed around, but no slot in the door even. It bugged me, no mailbox. Kate kicked at the edges of a huge hole in the wall. Wood clumped down, damp and heavy like clay, jarring the collapsing porch floor. Otherwise, just a regular dull house—two stories, overpaned windows and this porch all about it like a belt. Kate and I pressed against a window. The kitchen. A shallow white sink, shaped like a big soapdish, the old kind. A chipped blue bowl hid the drain, and you wondered if the faucet dripped dust. Somebody stuck a Welch's jelly jar full of shriveled-up flowers in there. Papery purple clover blooms, wispy Queen Anne's lace. I felt disappointed, "Kate, this is a real people house."

No one had lived there for awhile though. Kate was practical about that. We balanced our toes on the solid wood between seams and peered below us. "See that sofa, Kelly? Can you picture a grown-up just leaving it ruin there this long?" Smashed on its face in the weeds, dandelions waving yellow around the arms. A leg pointed in the air, squeezed by a thick cord of ivy. Bent springs from the bottom sliced through, rusty and pitted; they looked indecent, like an old lady's wrinkled bottom. "I'll bet a hundred brown mice live in there," I said. Kate shivered and I turned back to the house. She tugged at her frazzled braid again, "I'm not going in, Kelly. I'm going to watch out for field mice." She sat carefully on the edge of the porch and threw chips of wet wood at the spoiled sofa, jangling the springs.

I squatted, inspected the sides of the hole too long, not convinced. It opened into some sort of front room. "Aw, not so dark in this crappy hole," and then I had to go; Kate watched. Bits of dust stung my sore knee. The loose wooden floor, I worried about that. Held me though, and a ragged straw mat covered one part of it. "No cobwebs or bats—too bad." The walls looked like someone gave up ripping the wallpaper a third of the way. One rusted metal chair, the odd one off a K-Mart dinette set. The pink plastic seat melted through, blackened on the edges. Half a puke green curtain blighted the window; uneven, like pinking shears snipped the sides. I smelled mice, living deep in. I slid one tennis shoe to test the floor, shuffled to the kitchen. Dust rose up and fuzzed my nose and eyes till they felt choked in flannel. A window shade was split into thin ribbons, mocking someone's mistaken idea of fringe. Below that sat an empty green 7-Up bottle. One smooth glass bottle, puzzling all those sharp little teeth that chewed and frayed things in the night.

You had to chance it with the stairs. They cheated. You'd balance a bit on three toes—no complaint, but just touch down the second foot and crack! They gave way and through the step you plunged. The more I fell the more dust arose as if in silent applause. It seemed like a violation to sneeze somehow. The whole dry ragged place scared me before, but now I'm getting mad. I decided for all or nothing. Starting a ways back, I ran, hitting each step as lightly as possible, darting up to the next before they caught at me. I lunged for the top, dropped on the landing. I looked back on all the cavities I'd created, like deserted gopher holes pitting a brown hillside.

The first two rooms—boring. Worth about a six second inspection. Nowhere to look to; the hall doors nailed over all the windows. A battered brass doorknob gleamed right at my eye level. I crouched on my heels in the very middle of the room. Emptiness becomes eerie, when nothing's there to create shadows. Sharpens you, all this space and just my mind breathing in it. I thought of the slime pond choking itself, the flies killing themselves for grease. It's the same somehow, like this house torn up by a million tiny teeth. Just when I'm realizing something about all this, something mine and important, I noticed a weird odor. Not dust, mouseness or my sweaty hair. It smelled warm; a presence, something alive. I jerked my head up, scared, not prepared for people. I know what adrenaline feels like now. It's this tingling quickness in my arms and legs and I'm standing before I made a noise. I surveyed the room like a lifer catalogs his cell. Ins and outs, possibilities.

This part of me needs to find out. At least I know where—the third room, 14 steps away and my ears strain toward it. I checklisted the stairs in my mind, redzoning the worst ones. I moved near the third doorway. A light whirring noise. I halted, twisting at a button on my blouse. I couldn't translate the sound, not a fan or a shade chattering up, just a quick flutter. I waited for my eyes to catch up with the darkness of the hall. Something fluttered again; I thought of a turning jumprope struggling against the air. Another step and I spotted the corner of a tattered mattress on the floor, the brown stuffing tumbling out. A piece rolled near me, as though I'd willed it. I squashed it beneath my foot. When my toe slapped down a flash of bright white lifted before me. Crazily I remembered that weird man's flourescent legs. I started a giggle but it turned out a gasp. The fluttering burst out louder as the white shape flew up again. I cringed, hugging my sore knee. I waited to be called to reckoning by some being, listening for a command. The lack of words soothed me; a house without people. I stared at the broken mattress until the being named itself. I thought, it is alive, and an enormous quack shattered my balance and I toppled over. Just where the pillow would sit on the bed squatted a tidy white duck, folding its wings. I caught a glimpse of smooth brown eggs beneath it. We regarded each other and I composed my arms carefully at my sides. What color eyes do ducks have? It remained still as me except the curved

feathers on its breast moved gently, as if in rhythm with its heart beat. Bits of the straw mat, the window shade and brown stuffing heaped up under the duck. Mostly though the nest seemed built of a thick layer of wispy feathers. Not matching the duck, though; they curled harder, smaller. Underneath lay the scattered remains of pillow ticking. I dropped my head, relaxed. Someone's feather pillow ripped open, all that goose down unpackaged. The duck knew. Amber eyes rimmed with a damp cord of black. I thought of the piles of ducks denuded for that down; the house slowly ragging away to be stored under a duck's eggs. "It's a real house," I said aloud. I bowed to the creature. The white head jerked in regal response. I decided to gather up that 7-Up bottle in the kitchen. Then I'd leave.

Ann Zimmerman

When I was little my Dad made pancakes

When I was little my Mother made French toast
 on Saturday mornings
 Some pancakes were bigger than my house
 Others were
 shiny *blinding* pennies
 none were in-between
 I loved the little ones
 I rarely get bored of moneycakes
 Now I eat them with cartoon syrup
 Salvation Dali is my favorite artist
 And abstractions within cages imitate my thoughts
 PART 2wo

My mother, a wrestler on
 the UHF show I watched in the afternoon
 was always fighting
 with my father, the
 deth
 crusher he was stronger but she always
 pulled a triple (see (3)) dipple reverse
 behind the back in-between her legs
 pin on him
 he died watching a college football game
 (3) $(x+y)/2=k$, for all x and y , with k
 =the unpoured pancake
 and 2=equivalent to part two, by dethinition

Lastly (k) me ($x=7$, Why=monism)

I observe philosophy now
 the big pancakes
 the ones I never liked when
 I was a penny
 my mind eats utterances
 digested syllogistically
 Perhaps I'll be a honeymooner
 at nine o'clock
 I have a vest like Norton's
 I wear to be hip at parties
 All my knowledge flows to

the sewer
cartesian doubt runneth over
Fare ye well, toast, parents, and Harry Reasoner
I live in an ambiguous cartoon and
no speak no more

Bruce Katz

Four Fables by Peter Henisch

when I run after myself
they are correct in saying

then strictly speaking I am running
away from myself

but as long as I
can run away
from myself

I must actually
always be a little bit
ahead of myself

(said the cat
and kept on playing
with her tail)

your cage
(said the guard)
only SEEMS too small to you

because you keep getting
too near
to the bars

we must organize
(declared the hermit crabs)

and left
 proceeding bare-assed
 the shells which
 according to the motto
 on their banner
 kept their possibilities of development
 limited

deciding
 that it is no special fun
 living in this world

the vineyard snails attempted
 to crawl out of the saltwater container

anyhow a trace
 of initiative
 said the gourmand to himself

and flicked
 the most activist back
 as soon as they had reached
 the edge

translated by Herman Salinger

PETER HENISCH was born in Vienna, 1943, and has lived there ever since. He is a novelist as well as a poet, poetry editor of *Neue Wege* and one of the editors of *Wespennest* ("Wasps' Nest") as well as a jazz player, composer and singer. His "Hamlet Cycle" appeared in English translation (by Herman Salinger) in *DIMENSION* (Univ. of Texas) in Oct. 1970. A new book of translations by the same translator will shortly appear under the title *Hamlet, Fables and Other Poems* by Peter Henisch (Charioteer Press, Washington, D.C. 1979).



Dinner

He asked me what I'd told. I didn't say anything.

C'mon, fatty, he said, bending over my bed. Who'd you tell?

Shut up, I said, thinking, God. Who'd believe me? You're as plain as a dirty diaper.

He stood there knowing what I'd done. It bored me. Standing there like that stupid girl playing Lady Macbeth at the Thanksgiving play. Forgot half her lines. And Gene stands there, not forgetting his. Just not saying them. Saying them with his eyes instead. Going off to college next year. Big Man. The big man off to tell Mom, the cry-baby. He's such a tattletale.

I'd get all hushed up when she called. She'd say, Betty Lynn! Come down this instant. Right now!

If you don't come on down you're going to get it, Gene yelled.

Hush, Gene! Mom said. You'd better get yourself down here before you get a whipping, young lady.

After becoming so tiny the idea of thrusting off the covers required all the strength I had.

I came down into Gene's accusing, taunting eyes. My mother stood, hands on hips, her mouth set. A look that said, can't you ever? I wish I looked like her. Lean and angular like an Indian warrior. My dumpiness must be from my father.

Now. Have you been saying things about Gene at school?

I just said he'd been fooling around with Trinket.

Liar! Mom, she's just saying that because she's a fat pig.

Gene! Quit talking that way to your sister. You should be ashamed of yourself.

Well, I haven't been doing anything with Trinket. Or anyone.

Liar! Liar! Pants on fire! Nose as long as a telephone wire!

Betty! Can't you two behave? Betty. Quit talking about Gene's private life at school. And you, Gene. Start acting like an adult. Now, she said like God handing the commandments to Moses, I want you two to settle down.

Mom looked pissed like she always did when we fought. Her anger served as a kind of smoke screen, hiding the three of us just long enough to get back to our rooms without another fight.

But then came dinner. Walk into a table of faces ready for battle. I could feel them saying, Be prepared. You'd better be ready. My father explodes best; Gene's learning.

The first thing I remember about my father is him chasing me down some

stairs, popping his belt at my churning legs as steadily as the metronome during my piano lessons.

Once my father took me to his lab at Medical School. Inside were cages filled with rabbits, mice scrambling in wooden baskets, and a bathtub brimming with disgusting lobsters. The clicking of their claws sounded like off-beat tap dancers. My father picked me into the air and lowered me toward their pincers. I shrieked. He laughed and lowered me until my foot touched a slimy back. Instantly a claw fastened to my shoe. I yelled to get away. Claws mangling my face, bursting my eyes, and tearing my skin. Strangling in a sea of putrid lobsters. I never forgave him for making me imagine that.

He sat at the head of the table, a rolly-polly with squinting eyes that seemed to hate daylight. Bumps like warts bugging all over his face. I always put him in the dark: white and slug-like, mushrooms sprouting over his greasy puffed face. A fungus that could spread to me. Its spores probably somewhere inside me, in my blood, ready to root on some ribbed capillary and burst through my skin, dripping white, creamy blood. That's how babies are made. I'm his blood. I wanted to smash his face in.

I'd heard Gene and Beth doing it, one night. Beth probably thought I was asleep. The moans and shhing each other. Bed springs squeaking like a rocking horse. We have a night lamp because I hate the dark. It frightens me and I hate being scared. Once a huge spider, maybe a tarantula, crawled across my bed. I screamed out. My mother came and looked for it. She said it was my imagination. I was dreaming. I didn't dream Beth tip-toeing out of Gene's room, her night gown plastered to one thigh, like wax paper wrapped round a wet bowl. She whimpered a little, sort of slobbering, lying on her back. Her fingers traced from her pubes to her belly-button. Her stomach stayed round when she lay down and she poonched it out just a bit more, filling her hands.

Everyone geared up for the *big* conversation while the food and small talk was passed. It was always dinner that bothered me. Not so much the food—I didn't eat much but I couldn't lose. But the talk. My mother trying to smooth things over, protecting us from my father. Her words sheltering us like her hands when we were sick and had to miss school. She'd lie with me, huddling my body with hers. I could have slept forever like that. But Gene and Beth would come home, and then my father.

I've got a good friend who feels like me. Ellen and I can just sit and talk about our problems. We've slept together a few times when we spent the night together. It's comforting to have a body warming yours. No blood. No spores.

Dad began ragging on Beth. Gene egged him on.

I just asked you a simple question, Beth. Now. Tell me what you did today. No.

C'mon, Beth. Quit acting like that, Gene said.

Shut up, I said.

Well, Beth, my father said, ignoring me. If you don't want to talk at dinner I guess you can leave the table.

Jed. Leave her alone, my mother finally said.

She slowly shifted the attack. My father steamed about her horse.

Yeah, Gene said. If you didn't spend all that money on your stupid horse we could go on a trip. Mexico. Or Hawaii.

Beth slobbered on her food. She slobbers when she gets excited. That's what the doctors said. I felt embarrassed like I'd left a button open and my boobs showed.

See what you've done, my mother said.

She gathered Beth by the shoulders, forcing her out of the chair. I heard them go upstairs to our bedroom. Gene and my father poked at their food. I got up and went upstairs. My mother held Beth in her arms, cooing her to sleep.

That should be me, I thought.

Jay Bonner

A Hole in the Floor

We'd been playing there for an hour when we heard someone coming. Before the door opened we hid in a corner behind old tires and boxes of rusty nails and bolts. An old spotted rug of red or orange, thrown over our heads, hid us (I hoped) from sight.

I heard muffled voices. The door opened and I heard laughing. Then the stairs creaked as someone climbed to the loft and the boards settled right over our heads.

A girl laughed.

Suddenly I was scared.

A boy called from near the doorway. Another boy's voice replied from above, "Sure she will. Hold on, will you?" The girl's laugh followed this reply.

Ben had told me none of the big kids used the shack anymore. He'd said, Even if they did, they only came here week-ends. But Ben's always saying how he knows stuff just to sucker me into things. Once, Ben and I took fruit from a stand. Ben said the owner was blind. But a huge dog came growling and barking and chased us clear down the street. I lost my two apples climbing a fence.

This is my first semester at this school—David Jones Junior School—so I don't know the area well. I think Ben takes advantage of this.

We were lucky it was cool outside. Otherwise we would have smothered under the heavy rug. I dared not move.

I knew Ben was scared, though he would never say. Once we walked into a group of high school kids smoking cigarettes in the woods. They circled us and asked if we spied. Ben began to blubber and they let us go. Now he tells people that we joined them in smoking. He never dares around me.

The door closed and the two above spoke in low tones, like penitents at confession. I sweated. The rug scratched at my bare arms. Ben rustled and I nudged him with my elbow to keep still.

Then they started it.

I heard their talking quiet and something like a belt dropped on the floor. They said nothing but I heard their moans and pants. She asked him something which sounded like hissing and he grunted. Then I heard her cry and I got scared, real scared. But then she told him to come on, go ahead, come on. Right then I prayed.

The door opened and I thought, finally. But a boy spoke to another and the

door closed and the stairs creaked. And soon the moans started again. This time I knew hers.

I wondered about this second time. I had learned different. Maybe my father was wrong. I knew not to speak of these things. I remained silent during the jokes at gym or after school. Ben seemed to know about these things and told me often of girls he wanted.

Suddenly the rug slipped from my head. I decided not to cover myself for fear of making noise. I could see them through a gap in the loft caused by a missing plank. He appeared to be lying on her. She clung her legs round his waist. They thrashed steadily. Her head tossed side to side and, with it, her dark hair.

Through a dusty window I saw a bird, dirty, picking at its wings.

I could hear Ben breathing beside me. It sounded so loud that I was afraid they'd hear and we'd get it.

After awhile their moaning stopped. He gasped and I heard her say something. She tossed her legs off the mattress and stood, arching her back. He watched while she dressed. Quickly I ducked under the rug.

I smelled something like cigarette smoke. Then the door opened and they left.

We hid under the rug awhile longer, afraid to move. I slid it from my face and looked out.

Ben scrambled to his feet and started whispering furiously. "Did you hear that?" he asked. "Can you believe it? God."

He walked to the door, opened it, put his head outside. "Can't see a thing," he said. "Did you see her?" he asked.

"No," I said.

He closed the door and climbed the loft. I saw him through the gap standing with hands on hips.

"You didn't see her, huh?" he asked.

"No!" I shouted, surprised at myself.

He kneeled beside the mattress and smoothed his hand over its surface as if to flatten wrinkles. Then he grabbed a book of matches from the floor and read an obscene inscription aloud.

I joined him, feeling funny like I was short of breath. I thought maybe we should leave.

Ben burned scraps of paper which littered the loft, holding them with two fingers perpendicular to the floor so the flame burned upward. Just before burning his fingers, he dropped them. He lighted a half-smoked cigarette, pulling at the smoke and, then, flicked it to the floor and stubbed it.

"Boy," he said. "I'd sure loved to have seen it." He looked around. "I wish she'd stayed," he said.

He rolled his tongue round his lips and puckered his mouth.

"Stop that," I said.

"Christ. You're no fun," he said.

He stood, staring at the mattress. Then he fell, stretching his arms wide, his face muffled. He rocked his butt up and down in awkward imitation of the two I'd seen.

"You try," he said into the mattress.

"No," I said. "No."

Without my wishing it, I saw the boy and girl on the mattress. Ashamed at myself, I shook my head and picked up a piece of charred paper. I saw an ant near my foot and quashed it with my heel.

Ben lay on the mattress breathing quickly. Sweat beaded his arms and shoulders. His t-shirt blotted his back.

I felt an urge to laugh.

I walked from the loft and out the shack. I blinked in the strong afternoon sun. A large oak rose to my right. I wished to root in the ground. I felt hungry.

Ben caught up with me a block from home. We said words that don't matter now.

Jay Bonner

My Very Own Short Story

My plan was simple enough: put one word into the story every day. I made a commitment to myself to keep the words as they were when they first came to me and not to alter them once they were on paper. I thought that such a patient ordeal as a one-word-a-day story would have to be good. At the end of one year I figured to have completed a three hundred and sixty-five word story. I also counted on one day that I didn't have to write, owing to the fact that 1980 is a leap year.

I began. It was one week ago when I committed the word *the* to the top of a clean sheet of paper. I had deliberated for several hours over whether to start with *the* or *homogeneously*. I decided to consult a volume of short stories that I owned. It seems that F. Scott Fitzgerald started "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" with *the* and Stephen Crane used *the* as the first word in "The Blue Hotel." I was slightly disturbed to find that Ernest Hemingway began "Soldier's Home" with *Krebs*, but I finally decided that *the* was the word for me.

The next night I was seething with creativity. My word came effortlessly. *Black. Black.* I put it on my page, sat back and breathed the air of contentment.

Word three reflected the peak of my optimism toward the project. I had gotten up early that morning just to work on my story. I had a cup of coffee, then sat down to work. I picked the word *knight*. I could tell this was going to be the tale of a lifetime.

From that point on it was all downhill. For some unknown reason, I was in a very bad mood on the fourth day. I may have been something I ate or the agony of having to clean up the effects of my dachshund's bowel disorder. In any case, the only word that came to my mind was *mop*. I knew that the word following *knight* should have been a verb, but once *mop* was written, it was there to stay.

Knowing that my first sentence was in need of a verb, I made it my goal for the fifth day to include such a device. I procrastinated all day and I was awake into the wee hours of the morning trying to pick a word. I finally had one—*are*.

On day six I was overcome with a general pessimism toward the whole thing and couldn't think of any possible new word to write. I put down *are* once more, adding insult to injury.

This morning arrived, the seventh day. I woke up feeling miserable. My dog had shared the bed with me all night. In a last hopeful effort I grabbed a pencil and added the word *Krebs* to my sentence. I felt like a great writer. I parked a period next to my new word and reviewed my work. *The black night mop are are Krebs.* Hemingway's word didn't rescue my sentence. I called it quits. I tossed the paper into the trash.

John Paul Middlesworth



Lee Krohn

Union Valley Unvisited

And I go,
 go from the place I was
 to the place I am....
 I speed through the world,
 I am dim purpose cased in steel.
 The yellow line on my left slaps
 the corner of my vision again and again
 so quick so still on the road.
 I say to myself,
 it is one long stripe which blinks
 (whispers: *I am many — many! —*
my parts are always still,
it is only you that moves....)
 and whose end is nowhere I will ever go.
 The glass forces me to see
 I know the line is dismembered
 each part short separate
 painted on the asphalt, stuck with its place
 its place to remain
 as cars
 as I flash by forgetting.

Hell is silence and stillness,
 a German lady told me.
 A coffin is cool and slick inside;
 solid dirt is a friendly thing,
 not permitting movement.
 The earth will be my mother, sometime....
 She will be fertile with me
 but I will not be born;
 I will be at rest in her womb.

Speed is a tricky thing....
Sidewalks in small towns are too lonesome
to walk; only crickets hold service
in those neglected squares:
they survey their parish,
indifferent to the prayers and curses
of strangers inside their cars,
spitting at me as I race toward a new Zion,
not even caring as I speed to that place
where I spend my nights and days,
the end (the dream) of the high way.

And I read:
Union Valley Rd, Union Valley Rd, Exit 1 Mi:
Will these paths lead someone to somewhere?
Seventy can seem like sixty....

I hear the gasoline swish in its tank.
I am careful as I drive, avoiding turnovers.
Ashes are too light,
too freely moved by small winds.

Time stretched itself out,
stretched into seconds,
disected speedometer seconds
tunnels raised up from all earth
trusted ground swallowed chrome and blood —

Blacktop, asphalt, macadam, dam that dam, damn!
I zoom around the curves.
The power, the horses are screaming
underneath the hood: I am stroking
their strong necks with my fingers,
they remember me from when I touched them,
cared for them with my hands,
with flannel and grain, they know me,
now it is for me that they run!
Pistons pound inside, the rage of the horses
begins to be heard over the din
common in boiling monoxide worlds....

Did they hear the like at Golgotha?
And all the signs, the hulking billboards,
were they so evil?
And here, is it permissible to pass?

More than miles slip away — sanity, self.
A stop is indicated: stopstopstop.
I have always followed behind: I'll catch up!
I ponder much on the subject — where will I be then?

It will be a mystery:
I will not have been there.

Kevin Nance

The Vineyard

He swallowed
the words like wine
Pausing
only to inhale the
delicate pickled air.
Those words
musingly savored,
I repeated to him;
fruits of my sufferings
Dribbled
as I pressed my lips
and admitted that
I longed
to quit the vineyard.

Janie Pollock

There is no money in poetry; or,
the plural of opus is opera
There is no money in poetry
but prey for a poet,
a Poe of pot.

Give him a rope
and he'll hang a
pert trope
on your port.

Try to
pry the pro
(true tyro)
from pet toy.

Oy! You know
the type by rote —
rot! — ye trey
yore poets

(Troy poet,
Rye poet, and
Po poet).
Trype (typo).

Yet,
yo-yo op poet,
re-tyre!
Opt for
the ort roy,
toe on tor,
tore top,
pure ore-roe opery.



Dennis Rowe

To an Old Woman in Vancouver

Buckled as the sidewalk, the walk
faulted as your face, you pass
from sun into shade: head down, you
sense the loss, you pause, you talk
it out, you totter on beyond the tree
returning into noon: your neck
stiffly inches toward the source
of surprise, until the sun dissolves
like some holy tablet on your open lips.

Michael McFee

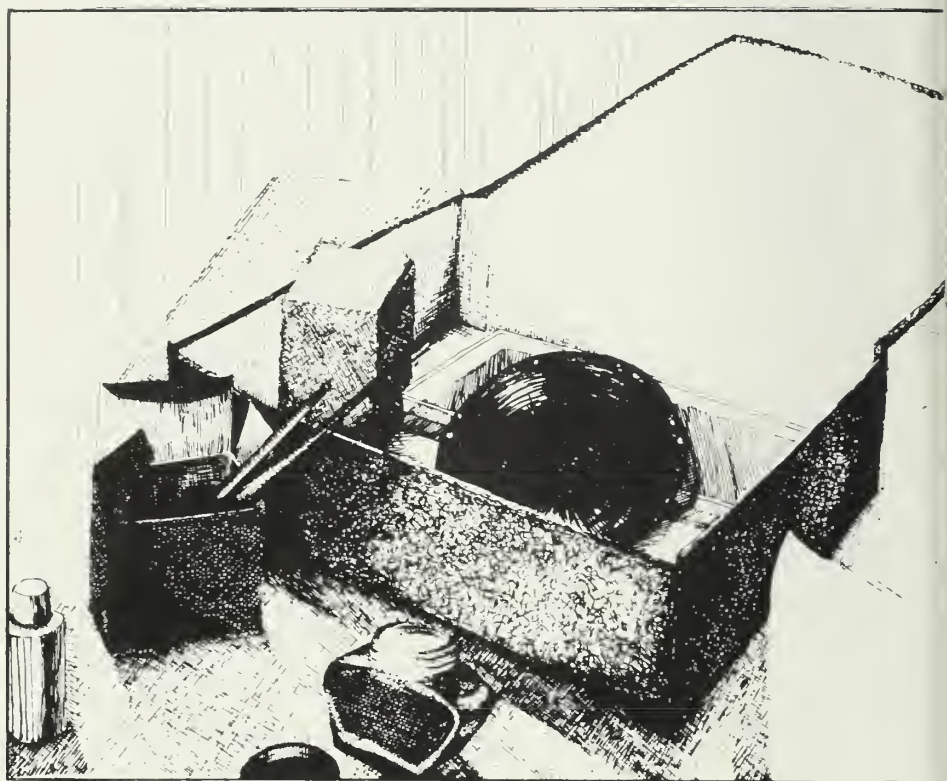
Investiture

Sleeves of ice on the laurels!
Everything, even ivy, under glass.
Grass crackles underfoot, each blade
distinct and brittle. Berries and leaves
gleam, glazed as holiday china.

Wake to trees losing limbs,
bushes twigs. Old poplar bowed
down at the Methodist Church, then
split like lightening. Gravity becomes
irresistible under this load of light.

Even the most insignificant branch
takes on form, definition, a temporary
layer of clarity, a sheath of meaning.
Look at those dead kudzu vines shine!
Mammals in their motion seem so dull.

Michael McFee



Notes on Contributors

Bob Antoni is a senior in Trinity College. He has studied writing with Alan Gurganus and Reynolds Price.

Dorothy Aronson is a junior management science major from Philadelphia.

Jay Bonner is a senior in Trinity College majoring in comparative literature.

Barry George is a third year law student at Duke. He was an English major at Franklin and Marshall College.

Donna Gregory is a sophomore psychology major ("until I change it") from Naples, Florida.

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Karla Jennings is a first year English graduate student. She likes her socks clean and her shoe-strings tight.

Robin Johnson, an English and comparative literature major, worked as the poetry editor for last year's *Archive*.

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Paul Krause, a former newspaper reporter, is currently a graduate student in history.

Lee Krohn, who has worked as a professional photographer for five years, is working for a masters degree in environmental management.

Michael McFee has a masters degree in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was poetry editor for the *Carolina Quarterly* for two years. His work has appeared in a number of journals.

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John Paul Middlesworth, a Trinity College freshman, has had a one-act play produced by the community theater in Statesville, N.C., his home town.

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Deborah Pope is an assistant professor in the English Department. Her work has been published in *The Ohio Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Poem*, *CutBank*, and other journals.

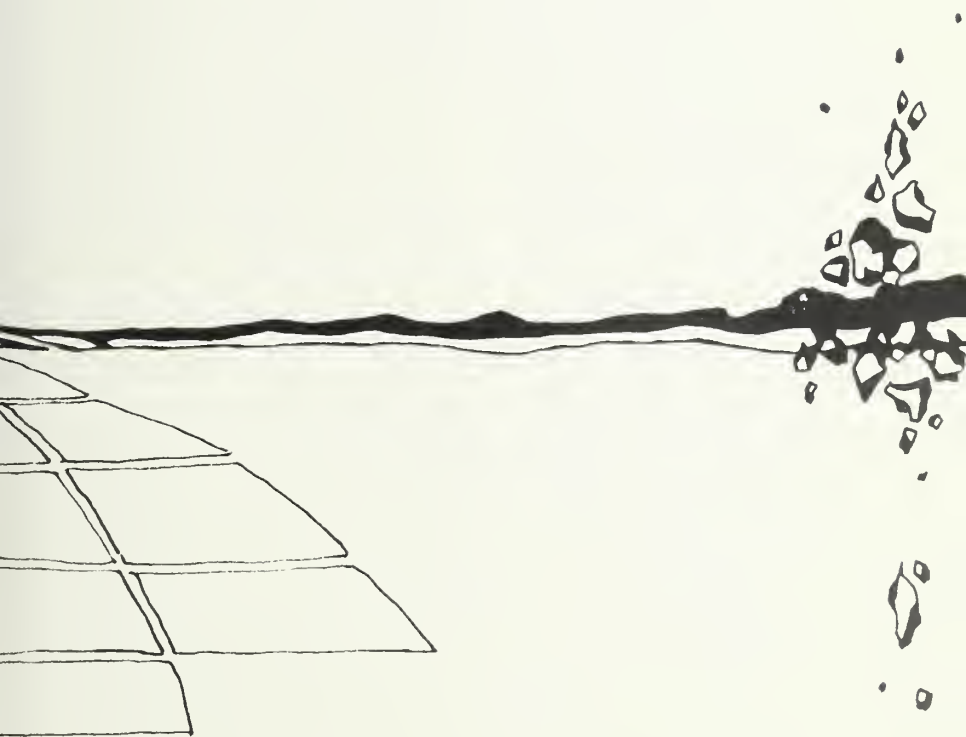
Jim Rosenfield is a junior transfer from Hamilton College. His writing is influenced by Cortazar and Frank O'Hara.

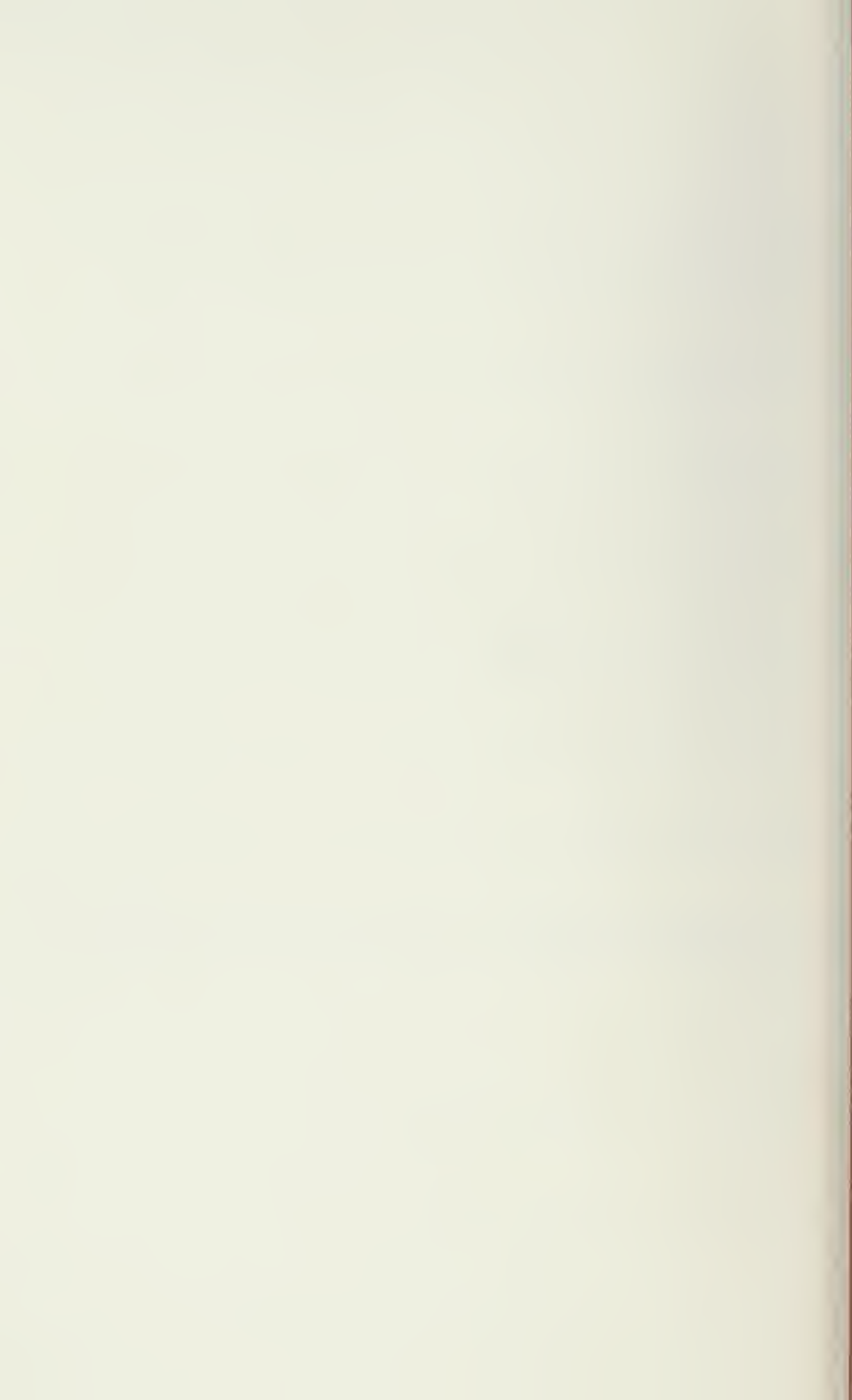
Dennis Rowe is a Trinity College freshman. He is anticipating a major in art history.

Herman Salinger's translation of Peter Henisch's *Hamlet, Fables, and Other Poems* will soon be released by Charioteer Press, Washington, D.C. Dr. Salinger is Professor Emeritus of Germanic Languages and Comparative Literature.

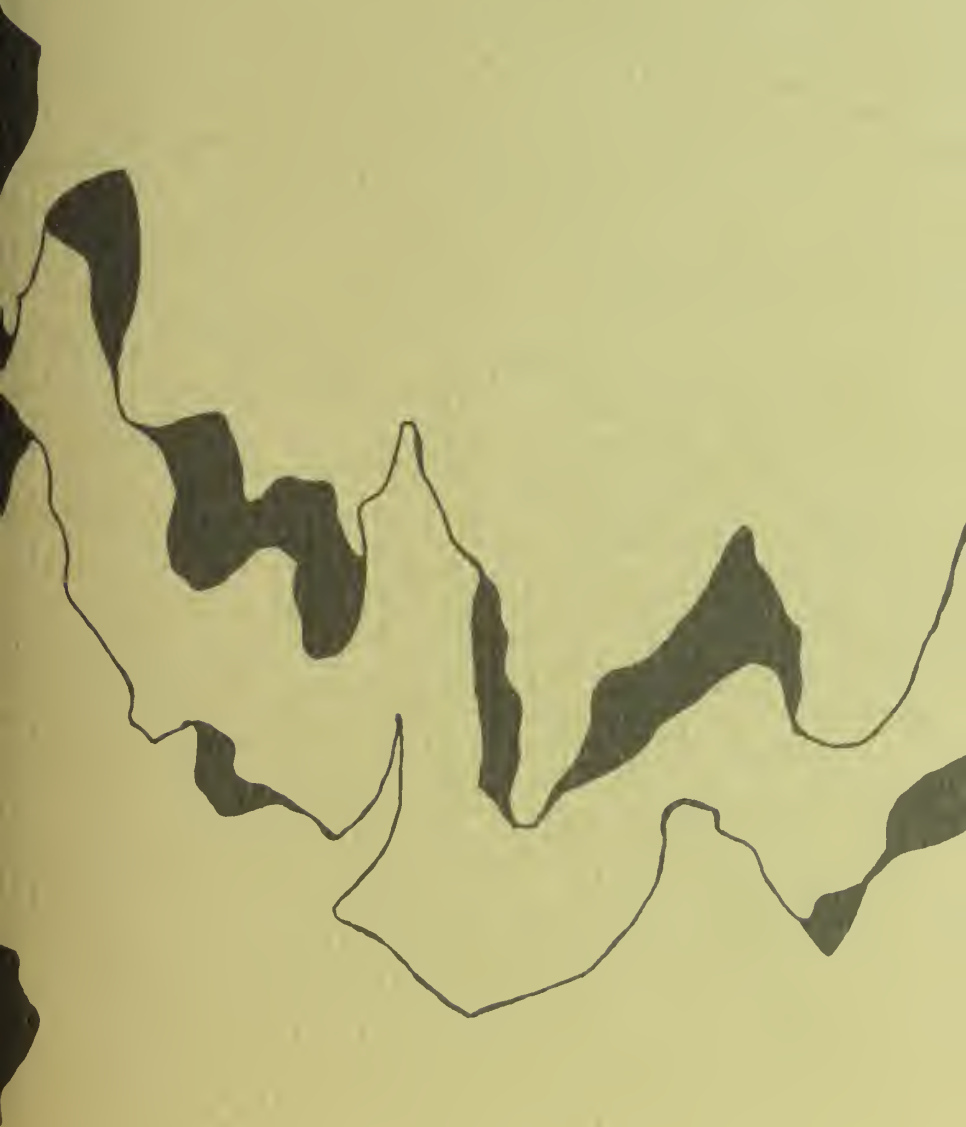
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THE ARCHIVE



THE ARCHIVE

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The Archive

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Clattering of Dishes in the Ivy Room

for David
Durham, 30 March 1980

Clattering of dishes in the ivy room,
Exchanging addresses and poetic writing,
The heartbroken breakfasters prepare to ride
away through the sky.

Did Robert Lowell die of drink or stroke?
Heart attack or alcohol, closed verse or open?
He saw him in Moscow drunk, I saw him in N.Y. sober and pale.

Trying to smoke pot in the woods, starting fires dropping
matches by mistake,
Surprised by the rector, who hurried away.
If you ever go talk at St. Paul's, don't mention this story!

Allen Ginsberg

Matrimony

I

Without referring to time, your words
 have hollowed a space for our union.
 Like you I have mastered the signs
 of allusion. In the house of my mother
 the misplaced tongues of her children
 called broken bread trussed with gravy,
 "gravy-birds." Tasted succulence, called it good.
 By her silence, I am instructed
 we shall live, not be forgiven
 whom first she knew and now must love
 by vague movements.

II

Mirror on the wall.
 Leaves, herbs, spices.
 What is nice on the eye,
 a micaceous combine. Might she wear it
 very well. In clay, brown to red, might she find
 humor, tone based in white.
 In white and by the blacking
 ought be sifted in her hair
 will she hear
 one laying pipes.
 Water will flow warm there
 and through her taps.
 May she drink
 she will dab and hear hard trickle
 ring and whistle,
 this to me, this to me, who sees and sees,
 her adorer,
 that may she bed with one elect
 to warm her entrails forevermore,
 she bellies to glass.

III

How long I've been governed
by the constructs of a mother tongue which knows best
the conjunction of man and woman. So long
have felt my own heat, under figs, beneath the windows
of young girls in houses, their heads bathed, being lathered by their mothers.
Gone tangled, and forbidden entrance
have relented until I cleaved
to my own warm comber.
What my mother has told me,
scratching at knots in my hair,
I have set down. From my bound
and illustrated book I chant
verses with no application.
And nothing is happening.

Civilize me. I cannot locate my tone,
in a moment of urgency am unequipped,
know the dull, internal third
is related to you, on the phone, reeling off
the reservations you've made for my flight.
In brief epilogue you mention
the pleasures to be had of those airline wenches
giving wings to your volition in sweet voice.
If I must labor sun to sun,
set stone to stone
to build a house in which our dead may lie,
then give to me, my numbers and reading.

Civilize me. In chains I will be transformed
anyway. Though my recipes work no longer,
I will grow brown, come stronger, learn to translate
your altruism, vesting none of my interest,
into my tongue. I will pervert it. You will desire it.
Better now to succumb. Give me reason or leisure
or take my meaning. If enslaved, I will bend you
beneath the weight of no altruist's question.
By my silence, hear me speak
What care I of your dead? Only of this construction
I ask, "How long? How long?"

Phinney

I stand poised for a last peek at the car, bending my knees slightly to squint through the cracks in the wall of the shed. I breathe a quiet *huh* into the afternoon air. I listen: white water thrashing against shoreline, my idling Chevrolet, faint hint of rolling thunder beyond some outlying island. The lean-to, a stack of creosoted logs (Daniel Boone style, I'd thought at thirteen), has outlasted all the layers of mud mortar, had been left a skeleton between whose ribs I could put my hand. Peering through at the car: a relic (fossil? memento?) of the Twenties, its monstrous front lights—I couldn't help thinking of the thing as bug-eyed—had winked, taunted me through the chinks for decades. I whistle under my breath, suddenly reverent; folks had been still calling the things "horseless carriages" back then. It is indeed a beaut. Nobody has ever been able to admire it; it has only been driven sixty miles in its lifetime—thirty miles to Newberry, thirty miles back.

I touch the padlock on the heavy door. The lock is rusty, near crumbling. I know I can crush it, enter the shed if I want. I finger the flaking metal.

What would Uncle Finn have said?

He would have tanned my hide.

Naldo Albert Phinney. Uncle Finn.

I decided long ago that the best way to remember Uncle Finn is to think of him when he was happy. What were these times? Fishing. Sitting on the porch, drinking whiskey, doing bird calls. Rambling through the woods. Always near the shack (Did he ever leave home, go to church, into town ever in his entire life?). I marvel now: why did I not wonder, even at thirteen, how the man managed to survive? He had no job, no family, nothing but a shack and an acre of shoreline clay. He went weeks without shaving (I remember the special days when he would tire of "that mess" on his face, go to the lake, whack it off with a sharp flintrock); the holes in his khakis were never mended, showing ribs jutting out like butcherknives; his remedy for pneumonia in the winter was to eat five onions.

But I was young, and noticed him for other things. I helped him collect the eggs from the hen-nests hidden about the woods around his shack; I brought his daily loaf of bread from Aunt Eula's three miles away; I fetched him the coffee beans, shredded tobacco, "rolling papers" that my father would bring from Newberry from time to time. I was there to listen to his stories, the only ones he would ever tell.

"You know, boy," he would say, "they ain't enough to do around here for folks no more; hell, I ain't hardly past forty, but I can still remember back when

folks was right sociable." He'd light a cigarette (fresh-rolled), let it dangle at the corner of his mouth while he talked. "Yes sir, folks'd come a-running from all over this country, from near about to Newberry, whenever something was stirring. I don't care if it won't nothing but a hog killing or putting up a barn, you'd have folks around about all the time. I remember when Daddy built that old log curing barn. I *mean*, they was folks. The bigguns was running around, hollering and throwing hammers at each other, and the women was crammed up in the house a-gabbing and fixing dinner, and me, hell I was up *high* will all them other younguns there at *my* daddy's place fixing to put up *my* daddy's barn. I felt bigger than the old man up on the hill. I was something. Me and them other boys was about your age, now—getting all worried about the gals, you know. It all went to hell, though, the barn I mean. You couldn't grow shit in that old red clay, much less burley bakker."

Was he lonely? I couldn't tell, being young, but sometimes it seemed so. He spent hours sitting in his skiff just offshore, rocking with the small waves, staring out across the water toward the distant islands (the lake, though medium-size by Low Country standards, was the shape of a raindrop after it splashes on the ground—fingers extending deep into the mainland, alternately eaten away by and advancing upon the earth, nearly five hundred miles of shoreline, with green-topped spots of land swelling up through the surface of the water at unpredictable locales). Sometimes he would paddle to the sandbar and, standing waist-deep, stab with a pitchfork at garfish bold enough to come near; or he would camp out on one of the islands in some gulch he would find there, dining on roast catfish and returning early the next morning; and he was apparently content to do these things by himself. I was certainly too timid (and secretly awed) to ask to come along—I sometimes felt that I was somehow a necessary intruder in his life, being of such petty age and piddling size; I could not match nor imitate his audacity, his raw earthiness, his utter lack of need—desire?—for people. I would help him in what small ways I could, but never could I feel of real use to him nor share in his dark moods—a thing I burned to do, craved with an unreasoning intensity I have never felt since. How many times did I wish I *dared* ask him questions I somehow knew would merit profound answers? Why did he not marry? Indeed, had he never loved a woman? And why did he never move his car but keep it hidden away in a locked-up shed, a mystery of movement and energy held inert, away from the roads it craved, as much a hermit as himself?

I sensed in Uncle Finn—much more than in my own father—a strange worldliness; even then I knew this was a paradox but could feel it nonetheless, a vague knowledge that he possessed answers, answers to questions of great consequence to me. I wondered how this could be; how could a man so sheltered, removed from the world know anything of it? Sometimes I would grow bold and hint my wish to have him talk about outside things, but I was

always stopped short by his expression—his knit brows, drooping face emanated fatigue, soul-age; it was at these times when I most suspected him of harboring some secret sorrow from the past, something buried further down in the pit of his bony chest than I would ever glimpse. Had he killed something, someone, stolen valuables, committed some other crime? I decided not; he was gentle if anything. He had lost something, something dear to him I thought. Did it concern the car? I convinced myself it must. Yes; he had lost something.

Unless, I thought, the trouble was something he had *found*.

It had been steamy that day, and Uncle Finn lay on the porch, loafing.

Striking a match against his bootsole, he mumbled to me: "Run in there and get my bottle."

I dashed up the steps and into the darkened shack. I scanned the fireplace and mantel, littered with bits of crockery and empty whiskey bottles. I could see the coffeepot on the hearth, filled nearly to the brim with coffee grounds. It won't be long before he'll need a new pot, I thought; maybe he'll take the car into town to get it, maybe he'll take me with him. I spotted the half-full bottle of urine-colored liquid and whisked it up, running back to the porch. Uncle Finn grabbed the bottle at the neck and took a long swig. I watched him, shifting my weight from one leg to the other. The hoot-owls in the pines trees around the house were silent.

"Got to get a new coffeepot," I said. "About full up now."

Uncle Finn lay still, silent on the porch.

"I say it's about full up now," I said, louder. "You got to get a new pot. You know how you get when they ain't nothing hot to drink in the morning."

I waited. He lay before me, daydreaming.

"Daddy gets awful tired of bringing you stuff from town. He's just too nice to say so. You ought to do things for yourself some."

He remained quiet.

I waited for a long minute, then said: "You can take the car. You can drive the car into Newberry and get a new pot. It'd save Daddy the trip, and it'd be nice for you too—"

He leapt up and *almost slapped my face!*

He jabbed a finger into the meat under my collarbone, yelled "Shup up! *Don't say another word about that goddam car!*"

I tasted vomit on my tongue; felt needles on my face; turned and ran, tripping on roots, into the woods.

Had I actually heard the words as I fled or simply wanted so much to hear them that they'd materialized in my eardrums? He had not followed me into the woods. Had I really heard his lips whisper, through the maze of Spanish mosses, somehow, *Fleet, I'm sorry, come back—?*

Days, weeks later: he was standing beside the boat at the shoreline, striking a match on his bootsole, when I came stealing down the path. I could see the flame moving in the dark, first to his mouth to light a cigarette, then to the wick of the lantern. The light spread out from the lantern, I shrank like some demon behind a clump of vines. I could see him placing things into the boat—a net, a couple of fishing poles, a bottle. He untied the line from the tree, got into the boat, began to push off. I opened my mouth, closed it, then howled: “Wait!”

Grinning no doubt, his voice floated up the path: “I was wondering how long you was gone stand there. Come on.”

I walked, then ran down the path, clambered into the boat. I settled onto a plank at the back as he paddled away from shore.

I waited until we were well out on the lake. Then the words shot from my mouth like bullets. “Was Marney pretty?”

I felt my buttocks tighten on the pine plank, my jaw was heavy. I could see the orange glow of his cigarette grow and fade, grow and fade; the light reflected in his eyes, the three flames breathing and dying in deliberate unison as the seconds passed.

Uncle Finn rumbled: “You been talking to your mama.”

I nodded; I had. But I had only gotten the barest bones of the story: Uncle Finn had loved a girl named Marney; Marney had died. I had begun to see the surface of the life, the knowledge of the world that I had suspected my uncle of possessing, but—it was not enough. I craved complete revelation of his past. Why? Would I learn to avoid his mistakes or to imitate them?

Uncle Finn put down the paddle and looked out across the darkened lake. He gazed at the sky, saw no stars. He felt the clouds moving above him, it seemed, craning his neck, sniffing the air.

“Always done my best fishing at night,” he said. He held up the lantern, watching the light’s reflection on the black water. “Them fish down there, they ain’t got a chance. They’re just a bunch of helpless sons of bitches. They look up here and see this light, and *shit*. They can’t do a thing in the world but run right to it. You know what I mean, boy? Once they get that shine in their eyes, it’s all over. Hell, it wouldn’t matter if they *knew* they was going to get hooked. They’d still have to get at that light, because it’s buried deep down in their little fishy brains and for them, they ain’t nothing else in the world with a bit of meaning to it except that light. They’re stupid sons of bitches, them fish.”

I watched, frozen, as he hung his legs over the edge of the boat, waving his bare feet over the surface of the water, then dropping them in, splashing about. The boat tipped far to one side; would he kill us both? I grabbed the other side of the skiff to regain balance, using my other hand to shield my face from flying drops of lakewater.

He stopped. His legs hung limp in the water.

"Won't catch no fish like that," I said.

"I reckon they can't help it," he said dreamily. "They're just fish, I reckon. And that ain't but one step above us folks."

"You mean *below* us."

"I mean what I say." He threw his fishing pole into the lake; watching it float away, he half-whispered: "Marney. Marney. . . . Yeah, Fleet, folks said the Lord had sent her straight down from among the angels, she was so pretty. . . . Remember it just like yesterday—Daddy's barnbuilder when I first laid eyes on her. I helped her down off her horse—a little apaloosa with a dappled rump—and that was all she wrote. . . ."

Thunder. Flash before my eyes—lightning—felt it inside my head—

"*God damn it to hell!*" he screamed across the lake. His face whitewashed in sudden light—wells of bile rising from my stomach to my mouth—"She had to get away, away from here, away from Lake. *She had to.* I said: What the hell's wrong with here? but there won't nothing on earth to stop her; hell no, this country won't good enough for her, she had to go out and find herself something!" He spat out the cigarette butt, reached for the bottle, swilled. "She found something all right—" he rasped, the words wrenched up as if from a rusted pump—"a busted appendix in her side. . . ."

Be careful now, I thought, ached to say. You must not die now, Uncle Finn, you must allow no part of you to die now, you're all I've got!

I began to crawl toward him. He must have felt the boat tremble, for he shouted into the darkness—I could see him only during the lightning—"Don't come no closer, Fleet! You wanted to know so goddamn much about that car! Well—" I suddenly felt a ringing in my ears, clanging so loud as to threaten to drown out everything else—he spoke calmer now—"I bought the thing on my seventeenth birthday to go fetch her from Baptist Hospital in Newberry—she was going for a nurse—with money I'd saved up, and Daddy helped out. I drove to town all singing and whistling, and I got there, and. . . . I turned that car right around and come back and put it in the lean-to. Locked that son of a bitch up and swore it'd never see another mile."

Uncle Finn was finished. I was exhausted. He paddled painfully to shore; I watched the white water thrash, the sky crumble, did so in silence. To think of it! Such complete love, complete ruin.

In bed, this night, a hundred nights: *Why stop, Uncle Finn, Why not leave, change, avert death? Was life too hard for you, or too long?*

*

I peer through the logs again. The car looks much the same—some saint has been looking after it, no doubt. Good; he can keep on doing it, because I won't be here any longer. The years have taught me that since Uncle Finn's death there is nothing for me at Lake. Perhaps there never was.

I chip away some of the stuff on the padlock. Through the cracks I can almost see the car's interior. My breath quickens; I grip the lock in my hand, tighten my arm for a heave. At long last—

I stop, let the lock slip from my fingers. It's his, I think, I'll let it be, leave, let him have it. It's his, I reckon.

I stride to my car, open the door—seat-belt buzzer buzzes. I smell the lake, hear water lapping against some treestump. My hand finds my eyes, covers them. Why, why did he stay here, die here? *Why did it go on so long?*

I kick the tire, knowing the answer, say aloud: "Something's got to."

Kevin Nance



Susan Disney

The Sum

How to phrase it, she thinks,
Knowing the phrase is content:

Light falls on the writing-desk
From the window thrown open

As usual these autumn mornings
While the Indian warmth still holds.

There are matters to attend to,
But against the wisps that rise

From her childhood forest haunts
And her maiden excursion to Naples,

They are for now abandoned,
Inconsequent as the shift

A life-size figure describes
As it dwindles from where it once

Leaned toward her in this very light
To the likeness of a child

Waving where the sand-rutted road
Becomes a lemon-white line

Shining wet against wet cedars,
and seems no more than a point

In accord with the laws of perspective,
The blue of an autumn jacket

That blinks once into zero,
A circuit the nerves remember

As meaning that had no questions
And will not come again.

Steve Harrison

Water Music

A delicate dance you did, turning
lightly at wrists and elbows,
spreading your saffron dress
as you waltzed down the dark veranda.
Fireflies threaded the trees with yellow
and their images shimmered green
when we turned to the wine and glasses.

You were sliding headfirst toward stones
at the bottom of the lake, expelling
your breath to rise, eyes closed, and shake
white drops from your hair, that go gold
and green before falling indistinguishably
blue in cold blue water. Handel's
Water Music, you said, translucencies
of oboes, horns, and clarinets
poured in the ear like a potion
to make you consider and forget:
our flesh will ravel
to grains that are lost in the grass;
fine bones will fail in their connection,
gesture no more in gaiety nor point the way
our hope habitually takes us,
separate and discrete to a stream
where light flickers sliver and green
through oak leaves upon water
that crosses blue stones and turns,
falling, arranging itself,
gathering momentum like love.

As though we'd drown, we turned
to study the dark particulars
of ourselves as a last distinction
we cling to, salvaging what grace we can
from our inchoate turnings to praise
the seasons, the dawn, and every magnificent sky.

Vico Dies in the Bath

Last light spills gold down
on the nodding gardens, veiled
Carollers murmur yes yes ah
Yes to the fragrant alchemy.

They say water wants a level.
Let this find its own.
The warm animal of wind moves
blossoming through red tulip rows.

George Witte

Bill Brown and the Moth

She prefers the grim lattice of screens
 to the billowing begonia heads that hold
 her cousins helpless as dogs coupling
 on the wind's hollow grace;
 a bare bulb in an alcove
 making its domain of hard light—
 glinting spiders on the scalloped shelf
 a pile of scuttling leaves moths
 Moths moon-huge in feather and green
 fur flood the edges like dark swans
 over the sputtering distant yellow globe
 so easily obscured by a few swollen clouds.

Bill Brown is a night fisherman.
 His jeep must run on phlegm,
 for the engine coughs the stooping owls quiet.
 On the lake, monstrous black bass
 rise like moths to his lantern,
 bass that saw the first tendrils shoot
 down through the muck, muscular lilies
 boil open, maelstrom birds beat the water
 with wings of bone and tautened flesh.
 Brown wears flannel shirts and stained trousers
 clumsily stitched from one bond of green cloth
 by his hooked and punctured hands.

The boy is happy to yank crackling
 sunfish out from the end of his dock
 and throw them back before their O
 mouths can wonder at the shimmering of air
 or the sunblind flowers staring vacant from the bank.
 And he is very happy indeed
 to pin florid butterflies on the wall,
 flat bright wings obliging his teasing breath
 as he tries to stir their deadened memories
 of gardens, of shuddering over begonias.
 She, she the moth, would rather bait Brown's line
 and feed his lunging massive bass.

The dusk animals make their coven in the field:
owl and fox, deer tamping the dewy grass,
while she clings to a bit of russet bark,
wings rising and falling to the hot secret breath,
the moon sifts through the haunches' steaming,
white eyes blink up at whitening stars;
she lifts and beats slow and silent toward the house.
The domestic cat wakes and shudders a little,
currents of hair tensing on its spine.
The night light jars awake the alcove,
and she glows and glistens in the glow
and does not fear the flickering bats.
They dare not intrude on that hard circle.

Lucent the chrysalis that sired her.
She flows within the dark heart of the night,
and welds her antennae on its pulsing root.
And she will rise and move round any light,
and glide down low and silent on the campers' fire.

George Witte



R. D. Horto

The Miranda Color

*Is there, a naked Leda with a Swan—
 Let then the Fair one beautifully cry,
 In Magdalen's loose hair and lifted eye,
 Or drest in smiles of sweet Cecilia shine,
 With simp'ring Angels, Palms, and Harps divine;
 Whether the Charmer sinner it, or saint it,
 If Folly grows romantic, I must paint it.*

—Alexander Pope
 "To a Lady"

Summer, 1928

How to paint would be a good thing to know.

Funny, isn't it, how perspective really works? It's not at all just a technique to be learned in art classrooms—when you look at these lines on the porch there, the boards are wide by where you're sitting, and they rush away from you across to where I'm in the rocker, and they're thinner, somehow. If they went on past me, off the porch, continuing on into space, they'd come to a point over there. It all depends on whose eyes you're watching from, I guess. That man on the other side of the street is as big as my little finger; his hat is the fingernail.

No, I'm tired of talking about it more. Can't we just sit here for a while? Mrs. Hutchins will have dinner ready soon and I'd invite you, she says I may anytime, but she's only got seven chops. Two for Mr. Hutchins and one for each of the rest of us. Sorry, really, because I'd love to ask you to stay.

It seems we've been doing this for a long time now, don't you think? Would you hand me my glass? Thanks. I mean, it's only been a month or so, hasn't it? And every night—here on the porch like this. . . it seems I've known you for years. Yes, in fact, it's been a little more than a month, now that I think about it. Don't you remember when—but of course you do. But I know how you like to hear me tell it—don't you think we spend a lot of time listening to me talk? You never really say much, did anyone ever tell you that before? In a way it's like I'm alone here.

When I was standing at the depot I was afraid for the train to leave and when it left, and I was standing on the platform with my trunk, I thought: God, now I'm really alone. Even though I knew the Hutchinses would come to meet me. Because they didn't really seem like my family, you know, and they still don't, though I'm trying to get used to it all. It seemed that train was my

last tie to home. The first words you ever said to me are etched in my mind the way you can scratch a diamond ring on a windowpane and write your name—I've always wanted to write my name with a diamond every since I saw it in Marsden in the oldest house there, which is a museum now, you know. On the corner of one upstairs window someone wrote:

MIRANDA, 1873

and with my name being Miranda and all, it just stuck in my head. I think Miranda is an old-fashioned kind of name, don't you? If I had a diamond ring, I'd scratch: MIRANDA, 1928.

You came up to me on the platform where I was sitting on my trunk and I remember how you weren't wearing a hat or gloves, even though the weather was still cold, for April. Your manner startled me; you came running up and grabbed a handful of my hair, not pulling, but taking it gently as if it were something that might get away from you. Can you say 'grab' if the action were very gentle? 'Grab' sounds rough and violent, and that's not how it was; you grabbed a fistful and gathered it together into your palm, sorting the strands with your other hand. I don't mind telling you I was scared nearly to death, you being a strange man, you know? And looking so wild and free with your hair blowing and, as I said, no hat or gloves. You said in a low voice: No one on earth can have hair this color. It is too incredible to be real—I want to paint it, but I know what they'd say—they'd say there was no hair on earth that color and the man must be either a Romantic or else colorblind.

I said: It's only red hair. You said: It's not red; it's exquisite. I said: I've had this hair all my life—defensive, as if having had this hair for so long made up for its color.

You're laughing now, but I was still a bit afraid of you then, of the way you'd come hurtling to my side, as if you knew me from somewhere. I almost didn't believe you when you said you were a trusted family friend, a neighbor just a few blocks away, and that the Hutchinses sent you to pick me up at the depot because you had an automobile and they didn't. But then I thought: of course it must be true, otherwise how would he know I was going to the Hutchins'?

I thought you were the tallest man I'd ever met—I still think so. Hand me my drink again? Thanks, I like to drink through straws like this; we never had straws at home.

They decided to risk it, the Hutchinses, I mean. They hardly knew my parents, and they'd never met me at all—why, I doubt they'd even heard of me until Dad wrote to tell them Mother'd died. Mother and Mrs. Hutchins were second cousins, I think, or third. It's hard to figure out how that works with cousins. What's a second-cousin-once-removed, really? Just someone you're not likely to feel related to until you're told you share some common ancestor. And maybe even then you wouldn't feel a bond. What this means, then, is only that Mrs. Hutchins and I somehow share the same blood, and I guess that's

why she took me in. I'm not asked to do much, you know, just to help with the housework and mind Meggie. Maybe when school starts I'll go back—it's not as if I don't have a right to, even though I'm older. I missed a year or two when Dad was always changing jobs back then. I don't care that all those kids would be younger than I am. You know, it's mainly for the reading that I want to go back.

Oh, you and your leather-bound volumes, that's not what I want. It all leads back to the same thing with you, doesn't it? I told you already tonight—I don't want to hear about it anymore. There are lots of reasons, and you know them just as well as I do. Tempting me with fine books, with money, a house of my own isn't going to work, I'm telling you! You're too old and I'm too young. I'm here just for a few months, anyway, just till Dad gets everything at home settled again, and finds a new job. Marriage is out, really, out of the question. If for no other reason than that I always told Dad I'd take care of him until I was twenty-one. Out of sight, out of mind—I think maybe you'd better go now. Give me your glass, I'll take it in with me. Don't you want to suck on the lemon wedge? I always do, but it makes my teeth hurt. Mr. Hutchins keeps asking me to remind him about this rocker, how it squeaks; I'll go remind him now.

Oh, all right. I don't really want to go in now, anyway, and you can let go of my wrist. It's too pretty out here, I love how it stays light so long. But let's not talk about it anymore. It's really too soon, you know.

I've been thinking—I'll let you paint me if you want to.

Wait! I only said that to watch your eyes light up—it's teasing of the worst sort, I know. But how could I let you? The Hutchinses would never allow it. You know it's different, the way you painted them. Sure, you could tell them you were just going to do a portrait of me, and they'd believe you. But they'd want to see how your work was coming on, and if they saw—well, I wouldn't want to be in your shoes, nor in mine, really, which is why I'm saying no all the time.

Don't think it hasn't crossed my mind that you could want to marry me just to get at me to paint. Because I surely have thought of it. But what would you do with me after the painting was finished—paint me again? And again? It would bore you. You'd want me to wash your clothes and cook and clean and have babies, and you'd paint me occasionally when you weren't doing someone else. I think you really *do* want a wife, I'm not saying you don't. I think your intentions are perfectly sincere. But anyway, I was teasing about the portrait. I just said it to watch you. Have you ever watched someone react to something you said, knowing ahead of time exactly how they'd react? It gives you a feeling of power to know it's all in your control to make them act in a certain way. It's as if you made that person. Isn't that funny? You need to paint me in order to feel you've created me; I have already made you.

Without having to remember, because it's so vivid in my head, I can see it all—how you drove me, not right to Hutchins' house, but to yours, and how you made me wait while you ran in to get your camera, and wait while you got it set up out in the yard. I swung my feet, waiting on the fence. You said: You look about sixteen, little girl. How old are you really? I told you twenty, not such a little girl at all. Little to you, of course. . . how old are you? Fifty? Well, you don't have to answer, but your hair is gray at the temples, balding on the top. The camera was to catch my likeness for you to paint from and I didn't mind letting you take it; I never thought I'd see you again anyway.

And when we pulled up to Hutchins' house you helped me out and shouldered my trunk and suitcases and I thought: But I do hope I see this man again, and then I wondered why, because I didn't know you and you could have been my father. We'd never been properly introduced, yet you had a photograph of me with my hair down, smiling into the sun, wondering why the birdbath in your yard grew plants out of it. Maybe you should clean out the birdbath.

Do you want more lemonade?

Well, you might as well take the lemonade. There's enough left for two.

What is it you want with me, anyway? Nude? Naked? Really without a stitch of clothing on my body? I'd die. Just because it isn't done, I'm telling you! Just pretend I don't have any clothes on and paint me from your mind—oh, you've done that already. I don't think we should be talking like this, what if someone heard us?

What's wrong with photographs, anyway? I never understood that. You tell me a painting captures time, but I think a photograph does just as well. It's much nicer than a drawing or painting because the real person is there in a photograph, looking out at you—it's the real person, not the artist's rendition of the person. Your paintings are selfish, really, because you are there in every single one of them, silent and invisible, but coloring the person more brightly than any of your pigments. And in a portrait of me we would also see you. I'd rather see you there in the rocking chair than in a portrait of me, you lurking in the splattered shadows.

I wonder how I would look painted. Would you be able to capture the color of my hair, my eyes, my skin? And look here at my arm, how it is made up of a hundred tiny colors and shades. I wouldn't want to see this arm rendered into a splash of beige. You say the viewer must use his imagination to see the hairs and freckles—but I say they should all be there in the painting, every single one of them. Because we don't know for sure that someone will bother imagining every detail, do we? We don't know that someone will stop and think about the freckles there and there, and there's another one. . . or the creases on my palm, do we? It's much easier to walk on than to bother with all that imagining. Just think, if you'd paint my arm that way, what would the

rest of my body look like under your brush? What else would you forget to show—my shoulder blades? My breasts? I bet you wouldn't forget my breasts, but would you remember the veins, pale blue, just under the skin? You'd forget, wouldn't you? You wouldn't show that I have a little brown mole there, would you?

Dinner's ready now, I should go in and set the table. I should have been helping all along, don't you think? The Hutchinses are so good to me—I certainly don't work hard enough to earn my keep. Well, I'll see you tomorrow night, I guess. This time come *after* dinner, why don't you. We will have more time together that way.

Autumn, 1928

Of course I could help you rake but I'd rather watch, if you don't mind. At least in this dress. If you'll take me home now, I'll change and then come back with you and help. . . well, if it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. And if it's all the same to you, I'll just sit here and supervise. Over here, hey, pay attention—you missed a leaf! It's all one can do these days to find good workers, and gardeners are the worst of the lot.

Oh, stop! Tickling is the worst sort of torture! All right, I'll say I'm sorry, but you know it was only play. Don't you think you're too old to jump around in leaves like this?

Let me light the bonfire, will you? You can hold my hair back—you really have to be careful with hair as long as this. It's forever getting tangled and tugged at. I usually keep it up in a bun, you know, but for visiting you I let it hang loose. Loose, the way it would be in my portrait if I'd let you paint me.

There. Fire is such a beautiful thing, don't you think? It's so mysterious, yet so familiar at the same time. I doubt that the first man to see fire was really surprised at all—fire is so natural. Even if you'd never seen it before, I think you'd know all about fire, what it could do, what it was for. There are other things in life like that—water, for instance. Surely, the person who first saw water knew what it was for immediately. No one had to say: Hey, I bet we could drink this. The person who discovered water would know exactly what to do with it, because it was what he'd always searched for, even though he didn't know he was searching for water, or even that he was searching for anything.

Oh, quit with that laughing. I can't bear it when you think I'm being cute when I mean to be perfectly serious. It's true, don't you know? People can be searching for something and not even know they're doing it. But then when they find what it is they've always looked for, they know they've found it right away. I wonder what I'm looking for. It's no secret what *you* are looking for. A wife. And a model. Nice if they could be in the same package, don't you think? It would surely be easier for you—having only one woman to contend with, and one who fills two roles. I hear that models can be *so* temperamental. I'd be

that way if I were a model. No need to smirk, you! *I'm* not the least bit that way, really.

Did you like that pie last week? I don't think you ever said, actually. I know you ate the whole thing, but you didn't *say* you liked it, even though it was home-made from home-grown pumpkins. I need to hear it said or I'll never make you another one. And it's funny, isn't it, that you talk about marrying me, but you've never said you love me, and I need to hear that, too, before I can ever consider marrying you.

Not that I'd consider it anyway, of course.

Let me tell you, I'm glad I'm back in school now. Mr. Hutchins is right; it's quite important to get as much schooling as you can. I still help mind Meggie, but only after school (I guess I should be doing that now) and on weekends. But she's such a sweet little girl, there's no problem there. Mrs. Hutchins says I was born to be a mother, I'm so good with Meggie. The boys are older, and I don't do much with them. They tell me jokes at the breakfast table before they go off to their school and Mr. Hutchins rustles his newspaper and tells them to watch their mouths around ladies.

At school they say I'll be able to graduate in the spring. The principal called me into his office and asked if I'd considered going to college next year, can you imagine? He says it's rare for a girl to go to college, but with me he thinks it's warranted because I'm a good enough scholar. Can you believe it? He thinks I'm a scholar! I wouldn't want to go to college, really. I mean I never thought about it much before. I have plenty of time to decide what to do. Mrs. Hutchins might want me to stay on to help with the house and all, and of course there's always the chance that Dad will ask me to come home again and take care of him. I wonder if he's very lonely without Mother. He never says in his letters, and when I saw him in August he looked well, cared for, happy. I wonder if he has found a housekeeper. A mistress? Trust you to say that. Of course he doesn't have a mistress. It would profane the memory of my mother. I wonder what Dad would say about my going to college. Of course, I might get married and never go to college.

But I probably won't get married.

Last year in Marsden, in the oldest house, the one that's a museum now, a girl named Miranda had scratched her name on an upstairs window. I've told you this, haven't I? But the picture of that etching stays with me—I want to know about that Miranda, who she was, why she would write her name with a diamond. I think I will write to the museum and ask. It certainly cannot hurt to ask.

Don't you think it's chilly out here? I guess I'd better go soon. I promised Mrs. Hutchins I'd watch Meggie and husk some corn for dinner.

But I hate to go. I feel I've known you forever. Isn't it youth that never feels the cold, don't they say? Then why am I so cold, while you're so snug? Your

arms around me help a lot—let's stand closer to the fire. You don't think of me as your daughter, do you? I don't want a father figure. No, I didn't think you did, really.

Do you know, that was my first kiss? Well, second, really, but you can hardly count Alston Morris, who was only twelve and had sweaty palms. He kissed me when I was fourteen and at a school dance. Right out of the blue, the cheeky thing! After we finished a dance, there he was, all of a sudden, with his sweaty palms clenching and unclenching around my shoulders and press press press—his lips sticky on mine. I hardly knew him. To me he was always just a little boy from the sixth grade. And very short, with freckles.

You're nice and tall and not a bit like Alston. And let me see your palms; they aren't a bit sweaty, are they?—though that might be because of the cold. Besides, I like older men.

I guess I'll see you at the art show tomorrow. Did you know the governor will be there? The Hutchinses are really impressed with you, I think it means more to them that one of their friends won the award than if they'd won it themselves. If they'd won it, you see, it would be bad manners to talk about it, and they love to talk. Since you won it, it's perfectly good manners to tell everyone they can that they know the famous artist! I'm glad I know this famous artist, believe me.

Another quick kiss? Mmmmm. Well, I've got to be going, now. Take care with that fire; don't let it spread to the bushes.

Winter, 1928

Almost the best place we could possibly be, don't you think? I have to say 'almost' because I still have doubts and I'm rather afraid someone will walk in. Of course, I know it's silly; after all, this is your own house and we're all alone. What good luck that the Hutchinses have gone to Lawton for the week. And what good luck they took Meggie with them—what kind of privacy could we have if Meggie were here? She'd be all over you, as always, wanting to hear your stories, playing with your moustache, making shadow pictures on the wall. So here I am, with the trusted family friend. How good it is to be here.

Let me make us some tea. No, you sit there—I know where everything is. We both like it strong, don't we?

And now we can sit here and sip our tea and think of how perfectly romantic this setting is. You take the pins out of my hair, slide your fingers through it down my back. You never stop being amazed that I can sit on my hair, do you? Actually, I can more than sit on it; look how it reaches my thighs. My Dad used to threaten to cut it when I was naughty—thank God Mother would ward him off. He'd stalk me, scissors in hand, up the stairs to my bedroom, and Mother would race up behind us, grabbing at his arms and yelling: James, James, don't you dare touch a hair on that child's head! I would cower in the corner behind the sewing machine and he'd stand above me, snipping at the air near my head.

Finally Mother would begin to cry and then he would stop and hold her in his arms while I escaped back downstairs. I never knew if he really meant to cut my hair or not; it occurs to me now that it might have been a sort of game with them—it happened quite often and in exactly the same way. Imagine, frightening a child just to play a game with your wife. Nasty, isn't it? But they probably didn't realize what they were doing. At least, I'd like to think they didn't.

Hold me tighter, would you? It is so cozy here. I could stay here for the rest of time, an artifact to be found in the future. Buried here in this moment like petrified wood; something beautiful held forever.

The letter came from Marsden the other day. From the museum, you know? Miranda, the other Miranda, was the wife of Elias Steeple—he owned the house before it became a museum. Elias Steeple commissioned Miranda's portrait, and she sat there at the window, hour after hour, day after day, being immortalized by some man's brush. It's what you'd do with me, isn't it? I'm sure the other Miranda kept her clothes on, too. Was she bored when she scratched her name with her diamond ring on the window? Is it tedious to be painted onto a canvas? I shouldn't think I'd find it boring, but this other Miranda would know. Miranda, 1873. I wonder where the portrait is now? The museum didn't say. I think I shall write again and ask them about it. I'd like to see it, wouldn't you? Maybe we could go to Marsden together and visit the museum and my father. I would show you the house I grew up in.

Do you want more tea? No, I don't either, really. Just kiss me, please, and wrap my hair around your hand, again and again and again.

Can we lie here or should we go up to your bedroom? I can't be expected to know, can I? You have to show me what to do. This doesn't mean I'll let you paint me, you know. Not yet, I can't give in to that yet. But yes, yes, I'll marry you. I'll marry you. I'll marry you a hundred times.

Spring, 1929

Imagine being spirited away in the night like that. My dad arriving suddenly, demanding I pack my bags; we have a train to catch, he said. No time for questions, no time for answers, just hurry, hurry; the Hutchinses up and in a flurry—Mrs. Hutchins handing me a basket of food, saying: Have a good trip darling, you'll be back with us soon. My thoughts running to you, how could I leave without seeing you, without finalizing our plans, without saying quick words to tell you how much I care, how much I didn't want to leave?

We rode on the train; past Marsden, past Lawton, past Quincy. Out of the state, in fact. I asked my father: Where are we going? He said: Out West, I've landed a fantastic job out there.

I'm going to be married soon, Dad, I said. He laughed and said: But not as soon as I am, Randy-Dandy!

When the train stopped somewhere in Kansas we got off and Dad married a

lady there. I guess she knew about it; she seemed not at all surprised when we arrived at her boarding house and carried her bags to the depot.

It is months that I haven't seen you. Are you waiting for me, or have you found a new red-headed Miranda? Soon, when I am twenty-one, when I can get away, I am coming back to you. Please be there waiting.

Until I come, please write to me.

I wish you had done my portrait because I found out what happened to the other Miranda's portrait. It burned to ashes years ago; how fortunate that she scratched her name on the windowpane or we would never have known of her. You see now, don't you, that even a painting can only immortalize someone temporarily? It takes something stronger than paint to keep someone forever, something as strong as a diamond, maybe. Still, I wish you had my portrait now to keep me in your head—you are right; a photograph doesn't do it because I am not black and white and gray. My hair is red. Exquisite, you said once. And my flesh is a million tiny hues.

Summer, 1929

The western sun warms my back as I write to you but I am dark, torn inside, withered and watchful; burning. A fire of deep, wanting to have you, seeing only a part of the whole. Do you know how I know I will see you again? Because they cannot keep me here. I am not a part of them; the difference between my age and yours is nothing compared to the great difference between my mind and theirs. I will be twenty-one next week.

I am walking only where the floorboards creak, I could fall through. There might be rats down there, I might break my legs. It is a painting of an old house and a new house, side by side. The defects are in the walls, in the furnace, in the light fixtures; they are hard to see from the outside. When I think of when we last talked together I cry, I could cry. I want to hold you, but maybe there is no one to answer my knock. Look at me, I am dark now.

I see you as if you were here. Your face is newly-shaven, and the moustache is still there, but the new-cut hairs are only just under the surface and will rise; by tomorrow morning, perhaps as early as seven, your time, there will be a tiny stubble. It will be scratchy. The hair will be dark.

I have let my hair down—each strand is a sliver in my back.

Listen to that—the dark has a whistling sound. It is not a train. It is not the tea-water, ready. It is not the swish of your soft brush, tipped in mauve, to color my lips.

Sometimes I think the roof may cave in on your painted house; I heard the workmanship on roofs isn't so good these days as it was, say, in 1873.

You seem a dream, almost. A whole year with you, now a new one without you. It is a sinking, underwater feeling I get to think about it. Holding onto someone underwater is fun only when you are a good swimmer. It can be frightening if you're not. The difference between scary and frightening is that

scary means fun, is not serious, is not real: a haunted house is scary. Frightening means sad, important, true: our painted house is frightening. Being away from you is frightening. I ask myself now: Will I ever really go back to him?

Swimming underwater is not frightening if you hold your breath long enough to get to the surface. I don't like to try that very often. The water and the fire, I lose myself in them.

Do you think I could learn to paint—or do you have to be born to it?

Kathryn Reiss



You Enter the House After a Day on the Mountain

*Moonlight filled the paper of each chalice,
and as the moon moved
each flower drank it down to shadow.*

—Laura Jensen

From the porch you see her,
this woman you do not know.
At the stove, her back is bent.
Her arm draws the wooden spoon
along its perfect arc.
Even through the frosted square
of window, you see how her braid,
the color of straw, divides her back
exactly in two.

This so astonishes you,
you lay down your tools
in their deep box and go inside,
wanting to know everything
about her.

She will tell you how she has prepared the fire
for your return, how she gathered vegetables
from the cellar into her basket,
and chopped lean stalks to fit
side by side in the cast-iron pot.

And as she turns to you,
you give her a few cherries,
dark tears, and she polishes them
with much attention,
with her sweater pulled loosely
over two hidden moons.

How easy it is to drape your arm
around her back, and lead her
to the porch where for a moment
she pauses to hold up a pair of blue skates.
You tell her the lake has frozen over,
how you stared down at its unfailing smoothness
as you walked alone on the mountain.

And she is still as she slides the skates
under your arm and slips her cool hand into yours.
She has prepared the fire for your return.
Together you inch toward the door,
but your steps seem to make no sound.
As you let the old skates mark their place
at the entrance, you are more careful
than you could have imagined.

Under the moon's hazy light the blades glimmer;
shadows move like scissors slowly closing
or the smallest wildflowers folding for rest.

Raisin Horn

Two Meditations on Hunger

for Darlene Grega

*The starved must be fed frequently
small portions of soft and tender foods
or they will die of what they hunger for.*

—Karen Swenson

1. The Gift of Stone

Your sorrows have gone too long;
your griefs watch you starve
up the lean staircase of night.

Already you have forgotten
to lie down for sleep,
or how to take a fork
between your fingers
like the fine horsehair bow
of a violin.
In the cold morning
I make lists that tell me
how to comfort you.

The thin chain worn at your neck
drips gold into my bowl.
Even so, I dare not place my wrists
inside to touch fortune,
as I have not learned to leave wishes
at the well for the fisherman
to bear in his great arms.

Do you not play a scene from an old film
as you walk the streets with an empty plate
under your arm, blue rings of famine
under your eyes? And must you depend
on hunger, hiding it in your coat
as you once did a pearl,
so the rich man will not pass you by?

If I offered bread
from my palms just rinsed with lemons,

 would you stop to sit with me,
 and take my hands like a priest;
 would you give back the lumps of wheat
 little by little like hot stones
 grown ugly in the sun?

2. From a Winter Rainfall

You rose from fevered sleep
to pour tea while stems of red clover,
dark in the meadow beyond your window,
swallowed the rain like honey.

When the steam drifted up to your hair
already dampened and curled from sickness,
you began to chant in the voice of a mad woman:
visions of fiery doves plummeting
into a bed of Chinese roses.

In your own voice, permitted only
to be hushed, you say you are drowning
and will not drink;
you are as the children
whose empty throats have narrowed
from neglect,

who have lost the will to swallow, now
as they form lines at dusk
to walk the mud paths home.



The Assassination

a crazy copter angle frame of dandelions
his coattails edge the bright civilian horde
 our candidate
 vast megaphone
 balloons
some apparition in a whirlwind
a fast foreboding that the sky will break in two
 these hands

Barry George

Walls Sweat Off the Moon

Walls sweat off the moon
 In half-formed liquid drops
 And dare the sun
 Into new sun faces,
 Dirts absorb insects,
 Hide these Startled Weightless
 From the quick light,
 Hide roots from their buds,
 Hide cigarettes from the fifties.

Joshua doesn't always remember
 But he guesses, clause by clause,
 From the lines that race in
 To save familiarity,
 Arrows in his margins and
 Gasoline colors in street puddles,
 Seven chords' maddened rubber tones,
 He woke himself up once
 Laughing.

A hand on the cold, grained wall,
 A mowing of the wet grass,
 Dirts absorb
 And the sun the quick sweat
 Sweats off the face
 Through the years of a thousand
 Open eyes,
 Through the eyes
 Of twenty sleeping years

Sleeping or lost.
 Hide roots from their
 Joshua
 Doesn't always dream
 But he walks, puddle for puddle
 The moon drops in
 In this Startled Weightless
 Sink sink
 ash.

Hudson Hedge Cut

"Mrs. Howard Stanley." She hands the agent her ticket. "NO SMOKING and an aisle seat." Mrs. Stanley tapped her rubber boot against the counter and watched stewardesses glide past on a moving sidewalk.

Cold air under her skirts as she hurried through the plastic entrance tunnel. "Eastern is happy to serve you." She hustled past prepared grins to 12D. She tucked her coat in the compartment overhead.

"Pardon me, ma'am." A low voice, smooth as Southern Comfort. The fattest black man Mrs. Stanley had ever seen stretched a hand past his stomach. "Mr. Crosby Wells." Mrs. Stanley shook his hand, feeling five rings on padded fingers. She introduced herself and asked, "12E?"

A stewardess squeeze past him, armed with a screwdriver, to remove the armrest. "12F and E." He tipped her five dollars.

"Mr. Wells, I told you we can't accept money."

Mr. Wells confined his bulk between the armrest and the window. Probably 400 lbs., Mrs. Stanley decided. He opened February's *Tennis World*. Mrs. Stanley drew monogrammed notepaper from her purse.

Dear Howard,

Thank goodness I wore long underwear—you were right. The waiting room of a major airport—cold!! I complained to the desk agent, but so did everyone else.

"Mrs. Stanley." Mr. Wells held her address book. "You dropped this."

"Thank you." She slid the book into her purse and checked on her wallet. As she relaxed against her cushion, rhythmic knocks vibrated her seat back. She peered between seats and saw a little girl, of kindergarten age, dangling tiny red oxfords above the floor. The girl kicked the seat, thud, then clicked her ashtray. She leaned across (all Mrs. Stanley could see) a tweed jacket, click. "Oh, June," a female voice, "can't you sit still? We haven't been here five minutes."

June slumped in her seat, rumpling Scottish pleats. "When do we fly?" She pushed stringy brown hair from her eyes and pointed, "Who's that?"

Mrs. Stanley twisted her head back and smiled at Mr. Wells. He creaked the seats as he leaned and winked. "I don't mind telling you," he winked again, "this is my first plane flight. I'm a bit nervous."

"I have some Dramamine."

"No, no," He waved his hands. "My religion won't permit medicine."

"Two Bloody Mary's then." Mrs. Stanley noticed his gold cross earrings and sneezed. She felt her own pearl studs. Still there.

"Ma'am, I'm not much of a chugger."

"Pardon?"

Mr. Wells pressed forefinger and thumb together and tilted his head backwards. Loose skin rolled over his collar. "He who tips the bottle."

"Now, one drink won't kill you."

"Ma'am, it's not the liquor I'm worried about."

She pursed her lips. "Mr. Wells, I've flown 30 times, and I've never felt safer. Cars are much more dangerous."

"But if an airplane crashes—*finito*, for sure. Now, my brother rammed his Volvo into a bank, and all he got was a split lip." He chuckled, expanding his jacket's green checks. "And that was after the accident."

A stewardess posed at the cabin door with a microphone. "Donna and Nicole, our junior flight attendants, will now demonstrate the proper use of oxygen masks and life preservers." Two stewardesses wearing blue inflatable vests sauntered down the aisle. "Like Parisian models," Mr. Wells murmured. *Howard, if you think I'm a bit pudgy, you should see my neighbor. I look like Twiggy by comparison.*

She dropped her arm over the page.

Remember to cancel dinner with the Olsons but please Howard don't tell Helen why I'm gone. She'll think it odd. Howard, I think it's strange.

Mrs. Stanley clutched her armrest as the plane rumbled over the runway. Across the aisle, an old man in a brand new black suit held his wife's hand. "Don't worry, dear." A drumroll of kicks shook her seat, and she heard, "Are we up, yet?" "Not yet, June."

Mrs. Stanley caught her breath. "Never do get used to the takeoff." She turned to Mr. Wells. He was trying to stretch the seat belt across his belly. "I'm afraid my size won't permit—" Flashing lights caught his eye. "Holy Moses. Isn't it a sight?"

Mrs. Stanley recognized the twin towers, the Empire State building. "Lovely." She flipped through *Good Housekeeping* ("Male Midlife Crises: What You Should Know"). Mr. Wells ordered Bloody Mary's from the stewardess. "And one for Mrs. Stanley."

The old man opposite them clucked to his wife, "Before lunch, even." He stared as Mr. Wells sipped his drink with one pinkie extended. "Quite a day," Mr. Wells said. "I'm due at my convention in two hours, but I'd like to see Cleveland first."

Mrs. Stanley said Cleveland wasn't much. "Not a tourist city, like New York."

"You're visiting someone, I take it."

Just tell her I'm visiting my college roommate. It's not the divorce that's unusual—Helen's done it twice—but people won't understand why we're living together after.

"My wife is staying with relatives in Atlanta. She hates these conventions—I'm always gabbing about improved blowdryers or testing new polish removers."

"You're a hairdresser?"

He rubbed his hands together. "One of the best." He gave her his card. Raised silver imprint read:

LE SALON
Crosby J. Wells III
Artiste de Cheveux
Extraordinaire

"When you get back to the city, we'll have a consultation." He touched her grey curls. "Pardon my saying so, but that's a middle-aged cut."

"For a middle-aged lady."

"Ma'am, you're as young as you feel."

"You sound like my husband. He says what I need is change. That's how the young stay young."

Mr. Wells agreed. "Perms are out." He flicked a grey wave.

"I'm sure you're right." Mrs. Stanley slid *Good Housekeeping* from her tray table to her lap. "I haven't read *Vogue* in a while."

"I don't place much faith in *Vogue*. They just copy French trends."

"But isn't Paris in?"

"We stylists think New York is the center of hair design."

Mrs. Stanley imagined elaborate sculptures atop Park Avenue housewives.

Mr. Wells pulled a folder from his breastpocket. "Hair breathes. It thinks. One must mold a style, not hack away."

Mrs. Stanley examined photos of The Madison Mop, invented by Mr. Wells. "I don't think this is me, really."

"We always modify our styles to suit." Mr. Wells took her chin in one pudgy hand. "Do you have a pencil?" He drew a line from ear to jaw. "The Mop is a little severe for you—perhaps the Hedge." He snapped open his designer backpack and unsheathed gleaming scissors. "We'll make you stunning."

She recrossed her legs, wedging herself into the cushion. "Thank you, Mr. Wells, I'll remain dowdy for a week."

"A crime." He unfolded a black towel. "Be adventurous."

"That's what Howard always says."

"Just let me comb it." He spread the towel around her neck, and stood, clicking his scissors nervously.

"You won't cut anything, will you?" Mrs. Stanley unbuckled her seatbelt.

"Sir," the stewardess smiled, "Eastern passengers are not encouraged to stand mid-flight."

"Some people," the old man told his wife, "will make trouble anywhere."

Mr. Wells pinched clumps of Mrs. Stanley's hair. "What a challenge." Then he sniffed to the stewardess, "Please don't disturb me while I'm working."

"Sharp instruments are not permitted on board our 727's."

The old wife reached a scrawny arm across her husband. "You'd better be careful he doesn't shave you clean," she told Mrs. Stanley.

"Quiet!" Mr. Wells narrowed his eyes, studying her face.

"The co-pilot will speak with you shortly." The stewardess marched towards the cabin.

Mrs. Stanley recovered her pen from the floor.

Howard, you're going to die the next time you see me. I'll be a new woman.

Mrs. Stanley closed her eyes. Mr. Wells sprayed detangling solvent on her scalp. The comb slid through her hair. "You're going to adore the Hudson Hedge Cut." She brushed green drips of solvent off her letter, smearing the monogram.

Howard, life is exciting enough. I'm taking a risk. But I don't feel especially young.

Snap. She opened one eye. A wet curl dropped onto the towel. "Oh dear."

"Mrs. Stanley," the scissors crunched through hair over her ear. "You must trust me. Goldie Hawn did."

"You cut Goldie Hawn's hair?"

"Well, her sister's really, but Miss Hawn made the appointment."

"Ma'am," she felt a tug on her sleeve. The old man said, "He's taking off too much over your forehead. Tell him."

Mr. Wells frowned. "Sir, I am master of operations, here. Please withhold your comments. You'll make the lady nervous."

The head stewardess returned. "They said you could be arrested for carrying concealed weapons."

"Poppycock. I told your people what I was carrying, and they laughed, because of my profession, you know. Just leave me to create."

"He can't stop now." Mrs. Stanley opened her eyes. A patent leather belt stretched in front of her nose. "He's only half done."

"He can finish on land."

"If you don't go," Mrs. Stanley said, "I'll scream like my house caught fire, and I'll sue." Hair fell onto her lap. "You certainly are cutting off a lot, Mr. Wells."

The stewardess gathered other flight attendants in whispered conference.

"A remarkable performance, Mrs. Stanley."

"I've had experiences with these airlines. Lawsuits work like a charm."

Mrs. Stanley chewed off her lipstick. She played with her wedding band. She brushed hair from her stockings. Now the scissors snipped slowly. "The finishing touches."

"Pardon my saying so," the old lady leaned across her husband, "but I think the back needs trimming."

The old man said, "We both think so."

Mr. Wells combed her hair dry. "Possibly." He cut one curl. "Voila." He fluffed her bangs. "The advantage of the Hedge—wash and go."

"And Howard hates to wait while I do my hair."

"We will be landing shortly. The temperature is a mild 40 degrees

fahrenheit. Please extinguish all cigarettes."

I'll send for money in a few days. I need to think this through. Howard, you may be suffering male menopause. Perhaps nothing is really wrong with us. I never promised I'd do it, remember.

Mr. Wells handed her a mirror. "Behold." She searched for Mrs. Howard Stanley beneath the wild halo of grey hair.

"Notice the fine lines of your cheekbones."

The old man and lady whispered to each other and smiled. The old man said, "Turned out real well."

"I agree," the old lady said, "very becoming."

Yes, she saw a hollow in her cheeks, less of a jowl. Her nose appeared thinner. "Mr. Wells!" He dusted his scissors. Mrs. Stanley tapped her pen against the traytable.

You could have picked a better city to get a lawyer—in spite of connections. I'll call you from his office. Maybe.

Mr. Wells offered her a Milky Way bar from his bag. "Success makes me ravenous." They laughed. Mr. Wells wadded the towel and swept thousands of loose hairs onto the floor.

Nancy Hanway



The Snake Plant

I have seen a thing shining at the tip of the snake
plant which crouches on my windowsill, a thing I just glimpsed
one morning in late August near a cornfield when a dew-

bathed toad acknowledged in passing my muddy foot; and too I
occasionally notice its presence when I sit nude in my
bathtub and stare distracted as worlds, worlds tumble out

from the faucet onto my mere unanswering skin; sometimes
I only imagine it is there and I leap from my bed and
run to the door and listen so hard that I think my ears

will go deaf and useless; sometimes I try to find it in
the gently setting or rising sun but nothing ever happens
and I always end up wondering if there is really a God; the

thing usually shows itself when I sit at my desk doodling
on a pad and it slides into the waiting corner of my eye
from the slick uppermost leaf and I look up and smile.

Kevin Nance

Somnium Celeste

*Men dreem alday of owles and of apes
And eek of many a maze therewithal;
Men dreem of thing that never was, ne shall.*

—Chaucer

I was a dupe of the past, she told me,
Believing in such things as
Signs and omens, and the cattle kneeling
At midnight, and taking mind of troubled sleep.
I wandered, she said, through wastes
Of doubt, probing fruitless hills.
She said *Keep to the day, the day, and leave
The night to joy, to me.*

I told her no. The breath of shadows
Comes easier in the absence of light, I said;
Men fall who are deaf to that breathing.
Dreams are bodies, sometimes clothed,
Sometimes not, shifting darkly.
These figures are only nameless at first;
They must have names. They are not unmeaningful—
They cannot be—why
Would God vex me so, for nothing?

I keep to myself
My thoughts about these matters now. And yet,
I must grip myself to stave off the red,
Blood-red, which glowers
From some hideout at every sign of dusk.
The nature of these thoughts
(For dreams are only nocturnal thinking,
Or indigestion, or the necessary clearing of the
Subconscious—she tells me these things,
A pragmatic Pertelote who sleeps soundly)
Foretell the convergent end, end of me.

But all of this is nothing
To the coming of morning.
With my hand, its now-salty skin,
I stroke her cheek before she wakes.
*Dream on, peaceful woman,
And be ignorant that you are blessed.
I will not burden you again,
For you are generous, and will let me share,
As much as I can, the beauty
Of the birth of each unshadowed hour.*

Kevin Nance



David Adle



David Adler

Three Poems

I.

The bright-eyed guineas squawk and squall
And fret now on their roof
Because of something they can see
As day gives in to night.

The silly chickens down below
Have long since been subdued,
And all week long the tallest trees
Have swayed with grackle leaves.

The middle realm of guineas, then,
Would seem to be secure,
A theorem proven firm and safe
As winter mud and men.

But yet they squawk, the guinea fowl,
And flap into the plum.
Then back they swoop to their black roof,
As night defeats the day.

2.

Columbus thought he heard a nightingale
Set the woods aglow
One deep purple night
Far from home.

No sage or modern calculator,
No Columbian questionnaire
Can ever tell now
The name of that wordless glory
Or the place of that spot in time
Where a fresh-spangled arrow
Quivered,
Poignant in his touring heart.

Disquieted a while, perplexed,
He put the miracle down in his notebook,
Then stumbled back to his cockboat
And the relative security of his men.

3.

In the starless night
I sleepless stare
At the black of my own lidded eyes
While a distant neighbor's crazy cock
Crows and, lying, crows again
As if he really could scatter the dark
And with his dim, ragged prose
Bring the dawn.

Dale Randall

A Picture Book

I

Picture this: the camera focuses on a young boy, slightly over one year old, clutching his father's arm. The father shoves him into a seat of the boat. The boy half rises, choking on tears, and the father tells him to hush. The boat cuts the water and the engine drowns out the boy's cry for his mommy. The mother rides her skis in the foaming white of the boat's wake. A shift of her knees takes her outside the wake, arms taut as if extensions of the rope connecting her to the boat. Suddenly a large ski jump flashes by and we see the thin cuticle of beach mounted by a low-slung white house which holds the young, newly-born baby sister.

II

"Your mother is having a baby," my grandmyra explains, her features hidden by the night's darkness.

Square white patterns fix the brick walls of the hospital behind her head. The bark of an oak scratches at my back.

"Why?" I ask, hitting at my younger sister's blond head. She drops my Matchbox red racer.

"She and your father wanted another baby. Don't you think it will be fun to have a little brother or sister?"

I don't know. I stare at the windows.

"Which one is mommy's?" I ask, pointing chubby finger at the white squares.

"I don't know," grandmyra says.

We sit, quieted by the dark, unafraid and comforted because grandmyra is here with us and my mother is only one of those white squares away.

Jay Bonner



After Dark

That night at almost eight Hugh beat the clock by a second and extinguished the alarm before its tinny buzz could fill the room. He shivered in his bed and tugged the woolen cover up to his neck. The blanket pulled out from where it had been tucked under the mattress and left his bare feet exposed and chilled. The varicose ulcer on his right ankle itched dully.

Mechanically Hugh stood up and pulled on last night's clothes which he had draped carefully over the straight-back chair with the broken wooden rung and headed out the door and down the hall to the bathroom that he shared with William and the other boarders. He rapped on William's door as he passed because William's alarm clock seldom worked.

"Wake up, buddy," he said.

The house was cold, and despite the promising clanking heard in the pipes, little heat was actually forthcoming. Hugh rinsed his face and shaved haphazardly. The cold made his skin tingle and the nubs of hair on his chin stood out tightly. Then he went back down the hallway.

"William," he said, outside the door.

"Hugh," said William, inside his room.

"You're up."

The lightbulb that had died on the landing one night several weeks ago was still out and Hugh had to grope for the stair railing. The steps were steep going down, and were thinly draped in a slick fabric which Mrs. Fountain called a runner.

"Runners keep the mud to a minimum," she had told him the first time he ever climbed these stairs to his room. "Runners keep the dust from flying. But be careful not to slip," she warned, staring up at him from hooded eyes. "I don't want any accidents around here."

But the dust could not be captured by the runner on the stairs or by the one in the downstairs hallway. Dust sifted in a brown fog from the yellowed wallpaper in every room; it drifted from the heavy dark furniture and settled menacingly over the whole house.

Downstairs Hugh made toast and peeled an apple for William. William always ate his apples peeled. "A guy could choke, you know," he had told Hugh several times, rather defensively, although Hugh never so much as raised an eyebrow at this practice. Hugh liked apple peels and ate the ones from William's apples, and the two old men got along.

Hugh looked in the refrigerator for orange juice but found none, and he had learned not to expect any. Although he repeatedly asked Mrs. Fountain to keep some mixed for him—he was, after all, paying for both room *and* board—

she only looked at him with her scared rabbit eyes, shifted her massive body nervously, and muttered that there just wasn't any left after breakfast. If a man couldn't keep regular hours, like getting up in the morning and going to sleep at night, she said, then she couldn't guarantee him a glass of orange juice. Not at ten o'clock at night, no sir.

He ate his toast standing at the sink, and made a second piece of toast with butter and cinnamon sugar. This he carried to the wooden table which had been painted white and was flaking paint in sharp crusts. A red and white checkered table-cloth with a yellowed plastic protective covering cloaked the top. Hugh lit a cigarette and watched the ash grow longer and longer until it dropped onto the table. He flicked it to the floor.

"There's your apple," he said to William, who shuffled into the kitchen, looking old and sad. "I peeled it for you."

"Good man," said William.

* * *

They left the house together and the night was dark and windy. A paper bag flew along the street, coming to rest under a parked car. Hugh looked at William, who trudged, hands in pockets, in habitual silence. Hugh pulled on his gloves and wished for someone to talk to. He reflected that William was looking older these days. But perhaps it was only the dim light filtering through the snow from the streetlamp that made him look so haggard and worn. Hugh looked around in the dark. It was always dark; he never seemed to see the daylight anymore. He lived now, as he had for years, in the darkness of the house and the darkness of the street, and in the quiet cold.

"William?"

"Hugh."

Oh, William, I see we have turned into two sad old men. "Oh, nothing," said Hugh. "I just wondered what we're going to do."

"Going to work like usual?" William turned his head slightly to peer at Hugh.

"Yes."

The lights all down the street shone hazily, and the snow from the drifts on the sidewalk blew upward into thin faces.

* * *

The buses never ran on time, and the two men waited at the corner by some piles of garbage. Tomorrow would be trash day. Hugh stamped his feet to warm them and puffed out his breath in a white cloud. He squinted impatiently down the street, searching through the streetlamp fog for headlights. William stood stolidly, mutely.

"What if it didn't come at all," mused Hugh, aloud. "Would it make a difference?" William did not answer, but Hugh had not expected him to. If the bus didn't come, then perhaps he could go back to the house and get warm and

go to sleep. And in the morning he would have orange juice at breakfast with all the other boarders. Hugh sighed, and a half-smile pushed at his lips. He knew quite well that if this bus did not come, he would stand there until the next one did. Hugh had never missed a day at work in fourteen years, not as long as he had been working at the meat plant. Before that it had been twenty years at Chauncy's, stoking the furnaces. And before that—well, he couldn't remember that far back anymore. It had been a long time, added together, that he had stood on corners waiting for a bus to come.

* * *

The crowded bus smelled of mackerel. Hugh and William stood in the back and held onto straps from the ceiling. A young, heavy-set woman sat slouched over her a paper bag, frequently slipping a broad hand into it and back out again, clutching gumdrops. Once when the bus turned a corner and headed onto the freeway, Hugh swayed sideways, brushing the woman's massive shoulder with his body. She shrugged away, trying to maintain her body space, and looked affronted.

"Excuse me, miss," Hugh said politely, and didn't look at her again.

Rivulets of moisture, like a cold sweat, beaded down the glass windows of the bus. The windows were frosted outside. The heat was on very high, making Hugh feel nauseated, and causing his inflamed ankle to itch hotly. He always felt sick on the long ride across town these days. It was dark outside, but he wiped a clear patch on the window and stared out at the lights.

The bus suddenly slowed to a standstill, and Hugh peered out the window, trying to determine why they should stop in the middle of the road. He couldn't see anything. When the other lane was free of traffic, the bus lumbered into it, and made a small detour around a body in the road.

Regarding it in the light from the yellow streetlamp, Hugh was able to make out the body of a dog, a large, richly red, Setter puppy. The dog seemed to have been hit by a car further down the road and had tried to pull itself over to the embankment, away from the speeding cars; a trail of dark blood attested to its progress. It lay in its blood, a bright spot on the dark road in the night city. To Hugh, the sight was strangely beautiful. He turned to William, wanting to say something about the dog, as if talking would dull the sudden mounting nausea caused by the overheated bus.

"William?" said Hugh.

"Hugh," said William.

"Isn't that just too bad, you know? A nice dog like that. I mean, isn't it just a shame?"

"What dog?" asked William, who hadn't looked.

"Oh, nothing," said Hugh, staring out again as the bus picked up speed.

* * *

Hugh emerged from the bus, almost slipped on a patch of ice, but recovered

his balance. He glanced down thankfully at the stout rubber galoshes he had bought last fall on a whim. They hadn't failed him yet. He waited for William, who left the bus slowly, and they trudged together to the plant and let themselves in the back door. The freezers hummed, and they dodged the heavy carcasses hanging from hooks in the beams, in practiced choreography. William hung his coat on the rack and immediately went downstairs to his station. Hugh prowled restlessly around the ground floor, checking storage temperatures and the strength of the packing material. He relieved the two high-school boys from their posts and sent them home. Then he made a cup of coffee and sat in the back of the employee's lounge, a small room with a card table and mismatched chairs lining the walls. Someone had taped up a page from a magazine, an advertisement for the Ultimate Diet Pills. Hugh had never seen that ad before and took it off the wall and read it while he drank his coffee.

He thought about Mrs. Fountain, and that she could certainly benefit from a few of those diet pills. Perhaps he would give her some as a gift if he ever decided to find another room somewhere. (Hugh had a wry sense of humor, but no one knew it.) His thoughts turned to the ride to work, and it occurred to him that the fat woman with the gumdrops needed the diet pills even more than Mrs. Fountain did. The image of the red dog flashed across his eyes, the dead dog who didn't need anything anymore. And here he was: he who needed everything. He was still tired, and still cold, and he didn't need the glow of a streetlamp to show him that he looked as old as poor William. He left the coffee cup on the card table, half empty, and went downstairs to join William. He packed steaks into orange-colored crates mechanically, and reflected that it would be darker still outside on the ride home.

Kathryn Reiss



Donna Lee Miller

Caliban and the Wheel

Before the ages
the man watches, brown, blunt
his secret whirlwind of papery leaves
spinning at his feet, the mystery unreeling.
He grins, do you see it?
but does not want to snap loose
the magic.

Cynthia Camlin

Metastasis

Pick them out
the ones you want for friends
on the lawn sweating, grinning together

Grinning on fringes
ridges of giggles
sharp eyes, red clay-baked, dry.

How to connect?
They are holding hands with their dogs.

When it's cold and dry
my face stays chapped, flushed
an edge of pain;
peeling, stripping off skin makes
fingers scabby
sensitive to the touch.

Their dogs have pointed noses
picked on pointed blades of grass.
Everyone pokes each other with sticks, giggling.

I broke it; I wanted the splinters.

Cynthia Camlin

Pottery

Milky swirl to the bottom of the bowl
solidified, crystallized,
Small translucent moonshells
cockle with barnacle cups
in clusters—

They close me in.
My room is surfaces of grainy glazes,
glass-topped jars, augers curling into spiral cones.
The sheets are paisley, around me
Soft and wrapping.

The cotton woven in is turquoise
in patterns that enfold;
Tingly fingers down the purple streaks
where waves broke rhythmically.

*I painted their curves and dips
instead of your face or hands or feet
Your voice driving clear to the beat.*

*When bulby clouds all around
were budding pink on the wharf,
You and I hung on the dock, pivoting,
Watching the whole island/water
expanse close in deeper blues.*

I closed in.
At nightfall I am in tinted, mint-colored glass,
Warm, tabletops of cups and bowls,
Rounding narrow at the mouth—
Each pot is dipped in creamy blue.

I feel the cupping, the darkening,
Round things cluttered, hollow, enameled,
Kindled in low, silent warmth.
Like being held,
Holding, positioning objects, arranging
them around me in a close circle
securely placed, almost molded into each space—
Molding me into a space

Where there is no one else.
I bow mildly and with a deep, deafening pounding, a blast
The water breaks.

Cynthia Camlin



WARSHING MY HAIR

STEPPY IN THE SHOWER WITH THE WASSER TOO HOT
 OUCH AND SCREAM TO MAKE IT STOP
 MAKE IT COLDER TILL YOU SMILE
 NOW SOAP YOUR BOD FOR A LITTLE WHILE

POUR THE SHAMPOO IN YOUR HAND
 WHITEY HEAD AND SHOULDERSTAND
 SOAPY SUDDY LARF WITH GLEE
 LARFY LARFY TEE HEE HEE

OUCHY OUCHY YELL AND CRY
 HORRID SOAPY IN YOUR EYE
 SOAPY SUDDY MAKE YOU CRY

RINSE THE SUDDIES DOWN THE DRAIN
 SOAPY SUDDIES LEAVE NO STAIN
 CHECK FOR SQUEEKY WITH YOUR HANDS
 SQUEEKY HAIR'S IN GREAT DEMAND

SINGY SONGS WITH SQUEEKY VOICY
 PICK THE TOWEL OF YOUR CHOICY
 RUBBY HEAD WITH LOVING CARE
 TILL NO WATER'S WETTING THERE

DRESS IN P.J.'S WITH FLANNEL FEET
 LITTLE BUTTONS AT THE SEAT
 BRUSHY TEETH AND WARSHY FACE
 DIRTY NAILS ARE NO DISGRACE

SAY GOODNIGHT TO MOM AND DAD
 SAY GOODNIGHT TO BROTHER TAD
 SAY GOODNIGHT TO EVERYONE
 HOP IN BED FOR SLEEPY FUN

WRITEY BYE: PRALINE HELMY

Notes on Contributors

David Adler, a sophomore history major, likes James White and the Blacks.

Dorothy Aronson is a junior management sciences major and Hoof 'n' Horn-ite from Philadelphia.

Jay Bonner is a senior in Trinity College majoring in comparative literature.

Cynthia Camlin has studied writing with Judith Dearlove and James Applewhite.

Susan Disney is a senior art major interested in photography. She hopes to work in Hollywood next year in the movies.

Liz Fannin, a junior in Trinity College has been printing with wood blocks since her freshman year in high school.

Barry George is a third year Duke law student. He was an English major at Franklin and Marshall College.

Allen Ginsberg currently teaches poetics at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. His works include *Howl*, *Kaddish*, *Mind Breaths* and *The Fall of America*.

Elise Glickman is a senior southpaw from Morristown, New Jersey majoring in political philosophy/political science. Theatre, art and writing are her major interests.

Donna Gregory studied art under Patrick Morrison for four years in Naples, Florida before coming to Duke. She is a psychology and art (design) major and plans to attend art school after graduation.

Emily Halpern has been translating **Praline Helmy's** works for the forthcoming edition of *Warble*.

Nancy Hanway is related to the famous adventurers William, Susan, and Peter Hanway.

Jennifer Harper is a Trinity College junior from St. Augustine, Florida.

Steve Harrison is a technical writer at Research Triangle Park. He received a masters degree in English at Auburn University.

Raisin Horn works in the reference department at Perkins Library. She has an M.A. in creative writing from Hollins College.

R. D. Horton is a third year student at Duke Law School.

Robin Johnson, an English and comparative literature major, worked as the poetry editor for last year's *Archive*.

Steven Forris Kimbrough is a Trinity senior. He believes in semantics, love at first sight, and eggplant parmegan. He is an aspiring sculptor.

Dusty Knight, a senior in Trinity College, plans to attend a California art school and pursue a career in art.

Kevin Nance, like A. R. Ammons, was born in Whiteville, N.C. He has studied writing with James Applewhite, Reynolds Price and Judith Dearlove.

Dale Randall teaches in the Duke Department of English.

Kathryn Reiss, a senior English and German major, will go to Germany next year on a Fulbright Scholarship.

Mark Scott is a junior majoring in computer science. In his spare time he is on the staff of *Tobacco Road* and *Duke Pravda*, takes art courses, and flirts with danger.

George Witte is from New Jersey.



the Archive

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Cover print by Virginia Tyler

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Announcements

The Archive proudly announces the Newman Ivey White Award for literature. It will be awarded each semester to the Duke undergraduates with the best samples of poetry and fiction in *The Archive*. The judges were selected from the University community by the Gothic Bookshop. The names of judges may not be made public.

The prize consists of a \$50 gift certificate to be used at any of the Duke University Stores.

*

Newman Ivey White graduated from Trinity College in 1931 and taught at Duke University from 1919 to 1948. He edited with W.C. Jackson *An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes* (1924) and *American Negro Folk Songs* (1928). In 1943, he became general editor of the Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore.

Newman Ivey White was a noted scholar on Shelley and published many works, among them an anthology, *The Best of Shelley* (1932), *The Unextinguished Hearth: Shelley and His Contemporary Critics* (1938), a two-volume biography, *Shelley* (1940), and *Portrait of Shelley* (1945).

*

The Archive gratefully acknowledges Professors Victor Strandberg, Magnus J. Krynski, Linda Orr, and Joe Ashby Porter, as well as George and Eva Witte, for their kind financial support.

*

cuttin' land

dust rumbles up behind the harrows
behind the tractors, plowing tired fields.
earth hangs in the air,
dead grass twists beneath clods
sun filters to cracking land
parch young men gray
thunderstorms lower toward the fields,
wind funnels rise.
the men come in,
pulling machines into the dry
they squat
and watch the rain fall
the wet earth odor
men smoke and talk
stubbing out cigarettes
in the oily toolshed dirt.
their sons play basketball
elbows knifing firm guts
laughing, tossing the orange sphere,
the cool relief.

visit

coming down to you
lying quiet and crystalline
past the gray-trunk cedars
standing in long manured grass,
I feel the knotted worms
slip in my palm again.

reeds lance the air in clumps;
skirted by soft algae floating
still hair.
brown water lips against cow piles near the edge.
minnows shatter in
to sunlight...
afternoon gilds your back,
ruffled by breezes rising low from pasture grasses.

I squat on the dam beneath the sweetgum
breathing my own sweat on the wind with the rankness
from the marsh.

briars cut my legs,
pink welts stripe across their whiteness
crusted with clay and soft manure.

easing ankles, I lean against the sweetgum,
rest my butt on burrs trapped in hard earth.

the hill protects us.
thick grass, fence, the road,
 rising up, gentle, watching,
past the cedars where the barren grass
 yields only to dead posts.

rain cups into your pewter surface,
 steam rises.
under the cedars I think
 of the house
 and sniff,
smelling the grayness of the
falling water
against your skin
and the toughness of the grass.



South Dallas

I had these visions of the children
struggling in wakes of fire, their sweat
spreading like fuel on the sidewalks
in summer.

Go there now, the earth's like dawn:
humped and banked above the streets
and half-revealing. A wisp of gyre
convolutes their pick-up games.

My voice says something like
'turn your inside linings out, and scatter
quarters at their sneakered feet,' or

'marry all the widowed wives, like
Mohammed said.'

So do; and the kids
flurry home, daddies take away the coins,
and fan out to the thrilling sheen
of liquor stores.

For they go out, these dogmas, hand to hand,
like casting in still pools.

Rivalries

My dear son wields
a passion, one of his own.
Vague and light-like behind me
he stands, in his soft avenues
of assurance and vibration.

So my parents call. He
and I answer with liquid
soothing chords of implication,
of taut arguments conceived on the heels
of galloping question, while he

lingers at my shoulder as though
smeared on a muslin scrim or other
apathetic fabric. He talks
while I'm talking, our voices
trip hidden wires to lance
punji sticks into waiting ears.

Voices advance and retire, and my eyes
blinkingly amaze at my parents'
words. Certainly, ties of womb and savagery
are strong, and you commit murder
without particularly thinking.

To Be Innocent of Wounds

It's midnight, and my dad and I are reading in the house's
Only lit room. His dinner-eggs are cooling as he studies
And spills his ash on the watermarks of the table.

You think you hear high tension lines
But that's the thin static of cicadas
Stolidly napping in the leftover heat of our elms.
They'll outlive us, I have heard; that may be why
Russell and I BB-gunned them when kids, crunching
Their paper skulls with neat shooting when he had nothing
Better to do, and innocent (like kids are) of wounds, or what
They begin.

My father knows, his reading eyes
For the time not seeing calluses of fire
In the night, tracing out constellations in wires of naphtha
And smelling of spent Black Cats. I learn

That cordite doesn't linger. But later he's showing me
Clippings from *Life*, from the hometown paper, fractured Polaroids
In those shallow grays (the guy on the left's
A vacuum now), his overseas cap, his glinting bars.
He lectures evenly on
The compaction of marrow into gristly spray, of boys' faces
Stomped into gaping absences of gray glazed jaw,
Of acne, of cartilage. He's asking me my grades,
You'd almost think, from the soft talking
Of his mouth. The night expires outside, but out there
In sleep, he says, you can still
Smell the sulphur.

Sisters

I am breathing cold,
and my breasts ache,
in solitary shivering.
My eyes are smile sore,
and my hair is smoke stale.
You have been and gone.
We regress again.

How, if we are grown
too big for this idiot's playpen
where bets are taken on
who can bully whom into
the left corner—which toddler
is better, at beating the other,
with drooled on, spite-ridden rag dolls.
They have so much spittle
in their string hair.
Your doll is hitting my shoulder blade,
it's soft, but consistent,
smack after smack, showing
how well you can aim,
to make me spin dizzy.

But my hair flies out frizzy,
not stringy like the dolls.
And I am not missing
an eye. I can see you quite well.
And you are, after the beating,
no closer to seeing
the soreness settling in me
from the left over druel and smoke.
And I am beaten into
this left corner alone.
Still cold.

Taking Inventory

The old chickenhouse,
 small and square,
stands in sere pale weeds of summer,
dry and gray as a termite corpse
 lying inert in the field
 with the remnants of caked
 manure of vanished cows.

 It was itself moved
 (by Pa with the tractor)
from its perch higher on the hill
 down behind the toilet
 when all the chickens were gone,
 turned to powder-bones
and only mummies of slathered droppings
 slough in corners
 their rancid ghosts run riot
 as wasps whirl the current
 of their effluvia,
 thin, malevolent
(with small pecks worse than chickens)
 building their own nests
 and growling from within
mumming through the spaces
 in the rotting wood
so it stands half a shell of sound.

an old thick copperhead dwelt under it once
 I hope he's gone
 I come here now
because my grandfather is dead
 inert himself

this was the last depository
for relegates not worthy
of the pumphouse the milkhouse the granary
it steeps
in stacked chairs,
bottles, old shoes, paper-dust magazines
wood-scrap of something
dead tools
whose dust my grandfather would not let
slip through his fingers
onto the trash heap
perhaps feeling an affinity
with their dust

and maybe somewhere something solid
my grandmother's canning jars
whose placement offends me
as she will need them next year
(of course, he put them there)
perhaps a surviving antique
homemade hickory chair
desperately preserving its integrity
under heaps of mould.

Now at last
(he is not here to stop us)
we can dispose of the silt
and rescue—if there is anything—
the misplaced.

Winner of the Newman Ivey White Award for Poetry

Living Alone

The winter we both lived here,
you used to sleep with the sheets all knotted
up under your chin, which is the most comfortable
way to sleep but impossible for two.
I'd wake up white and cold at three
and gradually tug them out of your fists and jaw.
Then I'd lie on one narrow rib
and stare at the dark, count yours and the radiator's breath,
study the one bare shoulderblade you'd
abandoned to the cold.

My hands were freezing, you always said.
You'd shake and turn if I slid toward you for warmth
or laid a palm against your ribs;
in a small voice you'd call me away and
go back to your breathing.
I'd watch the dark a little longer, shaking.

Trapezoids were cast on the walls, a pyramid your shoulder:
you belonged to the four-cornered mattress some nights.
I may have been dreaming: but I touched you once
and you were dreaming about wrecks.

Now the windows are open all night and you've
gone off on some other tangent, you say.
I dream occasionally—in my
nights of good sleep—about escaping from a fire.

Antiquities. Segesta

I've eaten alone, with a knife;
 for too long with a knife.
 Further up the hillside are white rocks
 and sheep looking like white rocks
 which make dulled music when they move.
 Here there is a step, two wells, and a ring of rock.
 It is not raining yet.

—Through dreams this floor's hardness bares my backbone
 a long line of marble stems, shining
 a stumbling road through that chilly pasture.
 Here my breath goes forward in a long white hand.
 In the grass sheep are wandering dirty pillows
 heavy as the one a child encircles
 and beats his head, and repeats. The dream
 is the museum's silence where we leaned
 over pink shells and petrified pine.

Addressing nobody, I offer: you can borrow
 my knapsack with the old knife at the bottom
 and one bruised peach (more soft than ripe).
 To the white hand fingering the ruins
 I suppose now we will never
 climb through the crowd of sheep, slow as white bloodcells,
 break the temple's fence and say:
 here there is a step, two wells, and a ring of rock.
 Around, roofless houses
 are stacks of marble like ice.



Brenda Hofman

Looking For Lines in the Back Seat

Something about the way the road slid by
under our wet wheels
made the thick darkness appeal to me
as I tried to interconnect patches of nebulous black,
never realizing before how disjointed night is.

Following the fog was easier—
misty white distinctly etches itself spidery on black.
Outlines set my mind at ease.
—until the fog got lost in clouds that were supposed
to be there,
and all the lines ran together
like a watercolor rooster spilling its red onto the sky,
streaking it purple.

Maybe it was the wet road
or the low song crooning from the AM radio,
but I swore I saw the fog
leave streaks on the misty window
as I was overhearing fragments
of a disjointed conversation—"I would
break it off if I were you"—
watching the night become the fog
"should I call him or write and why
isn't this as romantic as I had planned?"
which would blur my vision from the inside—
"well what would you do?"
"it might hurt a little..."
my breath was hot against the glass.

A Portrait In Dust

John was a big man, not lean like most of the farmers in Spring Creek. His shirt, open at the neck, showed skin darkened by dirt and sun. Dawn found him in the barn among old tractor parts, broken tools and mildewy locust posts once intended for a fence. Chickens squabbled for the corn he shucked and scattered. Hogs squealed at boot-point as he cleared a path to the trough. The Potz hounds were quiet, disdainful, as he shoveled the shit from their kennels, but they attacked the pail of morning rations.

The tractor engine wheezed, caught, belched white smoke. He hitched the tobacco setter and by seven was on the road to the leased, rocky field where his neighbors waited.

Three men in shapeless boots and tattered overalls shared a cigarette, the ashes blending with the gray dust. Crates full of young tobacco plants from the beds by the creek lay open in the field. He was greeted with nods, a wink, and took the offered cigarette. Two of the men got on the setter with a crate of plants between them. The third pulled an L-shaped peg from his pocket and tapped it against his thigh. Already shadows were out. The heat would be up soon.

John steered as straight a course as the rocks and grade allowed; flat, sprawling acreage was nonexistent in the Smokies. Wherever the slopes permitted, farmers coaxed small patches of tobacco from the mountainside. The men on the setter fitted plants into an iron guiding rod one-by-one, watched it thrust the stalks into the ground amidst a watery, foul-smelling gush of fertilizer. The man with the peg trailed behind, setting by hand any plants the ground rejected. Their work lasted the mornings, and though the others changed places every few rows, only John drove the tractor. Whenever the slope became more vertical than horizontal, they collected the crates and moved down the road to the next patch.

At noon he parked the tractor under a tree. They trudged home to the dinner his mother had waiting—snap beans, onions, cornbread. The clink of knives and forks on plates and the hard swallows of hungry men filled the kitchen. His mother looked on but said nothing. Satisfied they had enough to

eat, she wiped the damp hair from her eyes, loosened her apron, and sought relief on the porch. After a few more mouthfuls, John pushed away his plate and walked out. The others followed. His glance sent the woman back into the kitchen, and as they settled under the chestnut tree, the men heard pots and dishes clanking.

Until now their only talk had been of necessity: "Speed up, Johnny. Slow down. Watch out for that rock." With food and rest, conversation revived. They cursed the heat, the bugs. One man mentioned yesterday's accident. A local boy had been drunk, taken a curve too fast and met a VW bus head-on. "We'll miss Dempsey come bear season," the man said. "He was a good shot." The weariness and heat settled on them more heavily. The jerks of the setter now became a dull throb in legs and spine. The men leaned back, shut their eyes, thought of evening and the walk to town, and of women in clinging cotton dresses. Only swats at flies and drags on cigarettes broke the silence.

John looked at his friends. They'd seen him off to war and welcomed him home again. Nodding slowly to himself, remembering, he guessed their fantasies. He'd been that way once. Now he could think only of the scar that showed whenever he stripped off his shorts.

* * * * *

The Greyhound dropped him off at Alberta's store, and he took the old road home. The patent leather hurt his feet and a sweat-drenched shirt clung to him beneath his jacket, but he wanted her to see him this way, in uniform. Neighbors shouted and waved their welcome. The little Payne twins gawked so at the campaign ribbons on his chest that he gave them each one as a souvenir. "The rest are for Eugene," he told Jerry Payne as they watched the twins race inside to show their mother the medals.

He caught sight of the house through the trees. Chickens scratched the yard for bugs and his mother was at the clothes line. The place didn't look that different, maybe a little smaller than he remembered. Plus the tobacco had already taken bloom the day he left, and he remembered how its perfume had filled the air. He had looked back when he reached the gate that day. Ruby was on the porch, and Eugene, just waked from a nap and crying, was in her arms. She tried to make him "shush" and wave good-by, but he wailed all the louder. John had smiled, thinking how fast the tiny, wrinkled body Dr. Audrey handed him one morning had grown into a chubby baby. He looked at Ruby. She kissed the child and urged him again, "Wave good-by to Daddy." Then John saw the tears in her own eyes. Quickly he had opened the gate and left.

As he walked toward the highway, he had promised himself he'd come back.

Now he was running. He threw open the screen door, searched the house, but Ruby wasn't there. His letters lay on a night table by their bed. He remembered her becoming both a woman and a mother in that bed. Then his own mother spoke from the doorway. "She's not here, Johnny. She left for Asheville when she got them hospital letters." The woman was nervous, wary of her son's reaction. "She went with the Wallins boy from up the creek. He came and got her just the other night." John didn't answer, so his mother stepped further into the room. "She left the boy, though. I wouldn't let her take him. He's asleep in the next room. Don't you want to see him?" Now she was beside him, and her voice grew soft. "I told you she was no good, son." His hand left a red stinging mark on her face and the screen door slammed shut behind him.

He had found Ruby eventually. She was living with Hanes Wallins in a trailer park outside of Asheville. Through the screen door he saw that the gun, one he had given her before he left, pointed straight at his heart, and that Hanes' hand was steady. Ruby stood beside Hanes but said nothing. She never lifted her gaze from the floor. John turned and walked away, half expecting, half wanting the threatened bullet. It never came, but the thought of her in another man's arms left him slumped against the wheel of the car.

Jerry Payne and some of the neighbors looked all over Asheville, but never could find him. He finally showed up a week before planting time was over. Another few days and he wouldn't have made a crop. He went right to the fields and didn't stop working except for dark and the midday heat.

* * * * *

The cigarette between his fingers was down to the filter. He got up, walked to the tractor and started it. He sat there a long time astride the throbbing engine. The others arrived, still sluggish, cigarettes dangling from their lips. This first hour after lunch was the worst. Later, shadows would edge onto the field, maybe a breeze would stir. But now was the drowsy time of sweat and cottonmouth.

He swung the tractor into line, and the setter began its dance. Feeling the tractor's power, he slunk down further into the seat. The heat got into his clothes, caressed him. The ground, a patch of dust and rock, was now soft and warm and yielding. He relished the thumping of the setter, smiled at the convulsed gushes of water. This crop would be his biggest ever.

He heard his friends yelling, even saw the rock up ahead, but, exultant,

hypnotized by the heat, he didn't react. The tractor lurched, hung suspended, turned over. The others, thrown clear, watched him struggle to get free. The very width of the machine prevented his swinging a leg over and springing clear. He was pinned. They tried to pull him out but stopped when they saw the blood. They looked at each other, shifted uneasily, not sure of what to do. Cigarettes appeared from shirt pockets and soon ashes fell again into the gray dust.

Dawn

Before the first bus
Will groan across town
I shall paint another kiss
On the sleeping warmth
Of your crystal forehead.
I know we must part.
A cold mist
Grabs my arms.
And I want to cry.

It dawns. Adventurous cats
Disperse. At the corners
I hear the chanting
Of disappointed girls.
I shall cover you
Like a child. . .
East of Hudson
A cutting sharp wind
Pierces into New York's unprotected bowels.

I am a stranger to myself
In my unironed pants.
The palms of my hands
Comb your hair again.
My lonesome self stays here to caress.
I make no attempts.
At the next bar
I shall have a beer.

Clothing

Since your body
Does not tolerate
The choked buds
Of still
Feverish fibers,
Or the decomposition
Of discarded wool,
And since the mirror
Reflects immaculately
When there stands
Between you and it
Not even a
Transparent
Loin cloth,
I will
Cover you
With the silver
Scales
Fished from the lake.—
Those are the tears
Of lonely stars
That lie
As
Far
Apart
As I
Lie
By you.



The First Orchard

The ryegrass has gone and died before I noticed,
in the filtered light of these trees
it has slipped into the color of my brother's hair
in the old days. I feel cheated.
So have the woodpecker-pocked limbs lost some
of their purpose, yielding no more nuts, only shade.
We'd thought of pruning years ago but neither
time nor money seemed to let the moment come right.
Oh but

picking up pecans in the fall had been a time.
"Making Christmas money the hard way," a teacher
had told the class as I collected fifty cents for five pounds.
Kenchen and I ran secret races picking up the nuts,
waiting to see whose back would give out first.

My brother grinned like a horse
his freckles multiplied in mottled light.
I wanted his hair,
cool yellow in autumn.
I was younger.
My motto: "Let me go with you."

Lincoln had said he liked bare trees,
they reminded him of people stripped of all their masks.
Limbs and leaves—shaking the branches
for early hulls, climbing them for treehouses,
swings, watching cows graze under them,
carcasses swinging between some fork for dressing.
My father swung a stick to knock down a half-bushel
for a chocolate cake.

"My daddy planted these trees
before you were born,
before even I was born.
They'll outlive us both."

A storm is coming, like those nights on the back porch
in moving shade, listening to the thunder;
the wind tries to thresh the grain from the rye stalks now.
The limbs thrash, don't hold up the sky. Wave to it.
I want to climb to the highest one and look down,
watch us as they have watched us.
The ryegrass is dead like the color of his hair.



Hunting for a Church in the City

It's one thing to sit
on the steps of a shrine
eating a red leaf (petal?)
dropped from some unseen bush
and think calmly

I have a need for God
and another thing altogether
to find the place
where I can walk through doors
of oak or granite or marble
under some chiseled phrase
and see the face of God that I know,
that regards me
with bored but tolerant eyes
and hears my swift pleas
and wordlessly bears
their redundancy; I have come
on such a seeking
in the fifth week of a summer
in this city, needing
any small perception I can grab
of that look
in the smell of a church's air,
in the easy sanctity which
my head must question,
heart need; I must find
that face somewhere,
having looked inside already
and found it absent,
finding there no permanence
I can live with
for a lifetime—so
I rove on, combing corners
for a structure to house
what my chest cannot.

Long distances are best covered
in comfortable clothes
I've found, so I bare
my legs to the world
in gym shorts, inflicting
on all eyes their
pitiful maddening whiteness
maddening to me
but more so apparently to them
who yell

Polly want a Cracker
and

Boy you a God Damn Honky
from playground swings
that I ignore
(being from the South
having prepared me),
scanning the skyline for steeples
and sifting through street sounds
of trucks and the talk
of corner-loungers
for some hint of bells
or organ music, pipes
playing Bach being my favorite
after Mahler's *Resurrection* symphony,
trying to hear any voice (hopefully
call) which might be trying
to reach through the smoggy ether
to my ears wiggling
like an elf's or antenna's,
begging to have me follow
directions to somewhere,
somewhere I'm supposed to go
for an appointment with the Lord
or His direct representative—
I don't care which,
I've never had trouble dealing
with lackeys or young folks.

And so I have landed here
at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart
near 16th (whose heart is sacred?—
a pound of meat
imitating a hand pump
in the grossest way imaginable)
having heard no music
or voices, simply tired
and for now needing rest
more than Him.
It is dark already,
danger waiting in alleys
between here and the room
where I claim to live,
but I wait
and chew the sweet petal
(I've decided that's what it is)
that's been dropped
on my red head—
color scheme clashing as usual—
from someplace On High:
Einstein proved
that everything is
a gift to someone:
I suspect it has been my bait,
lured me here under crossed sticks
but with no nuns or priests
around, doors locked,
Mass not till Sunday
even if I (raised a Baptist)
knew what to do with it;
I try to decide why I'm here
and come up with nothing
except intense knowing of the hole
under my ribs
aching like the dickens,
and swallow the whole leaf,
hoping beyond thought

needing beyond want
that the leaf will fill me,
will spread inside my belly
like yeast and push
the walls apart,
leaning my head against this
cold marble here,
praying to any possible presence,—
 It is not my heart
 that is sacred, hallowed ground
 there made impossible
 by famine: No, not mine:
 Please let it be yours.

Winner of the Newman Ivey White Award for Fiction

Turtle Eggs

"Cats don't drink rum."

"My cat do."

He smiled at her, poured some into a bowl, and put it on the floor. The mongrel cat, its fur looking like the ruffled feathers of a wet fowl, limped over on the peg leg Prince had fashioned from a stick and a strip of cloth wrapped around the remaining part of the cat's leg. A barracuda bit it off; the cat went along to keep him company on a trip into Nassau, which would take two days and a night in his Abaco dingy. Prince had developed a method for working a hand-line using his mouth, becoming proficient enough to take the large barracuda. He couldn't grab the fish, so he flipped it out of the water into his boat, almost on top of the sleeping cat, and the cat lost a leg. It lapped up some of the rum, shook its head, and rolled over onto its back. Prince put the cat back on its feet, and the cat fell over. He stood it up again and the cat, attempting to run for the door, forgot its missing leg and flopped onto its face.

"You made him drunk," Angela cried, and she picked up the cat and took it outside.

Prince laughed: the one-armed fisherman laughing at the three-legged cat, laughing at himself, sitting on a pillow in an old toilet bowl like a throne, toothless, emaciated, and perfectly content.

"You want some?" he asked.

"All right," I said, and he handed me the bottle Angela and I had brought for him from the boat. I swallowed a mouthful and felt my eyes watering. Prince laughed. He took a drink and finished about a third of the bottle, screwed on the cap, and put it away.

"De rest for after I go conching. You would like some turtle eggs, Miss Angela?" he asked, when she walked back into the hut.

"Turtle eggs?"

"Dem better den chicken."

"Where do you get turtle eggs from?"

"I dis find de tracks and dig dem up. Plenty turtle dis lay on dis beach."

"That's mean," she said. "You should let them hatch."

"I don't take many. You want try some?"

"No." She pouted, upset with him again.

Prince smiled and took the pot of eggs outside. He poured some rain water from a barrel into it, lit a small fire, then hung the pot on a limb above the flames to boil.

Prince's hut occupied only a few square feet, but it overflowed with debris like a corner dime-store: bottles, pots and pans, knives and forks, a piece of broken mirror, fishnets, hooks and sinkers, sticks wrapped with fishing line, shells, a whale vertebra, what looked like a human skull, a Singer sewing machine and a Kenmore vacuum cleaner rusted far beyond use, a T.V. with the screen smashed in, and hanging on the wall, for decoration, a doll's head and an autographed picture of Dean Martin. Kerosene lanterns provided light. The furniture consisted of the old toilet which served as a lounge chair, a few crates, and his bed: a car seat over which hung, festooned and draped, delicate mosquito netting, like the canopied royal sleeping chambers of old. The hut had a dirt floor. The walls consisted of piled stones, without mortar, and the roof of boards and sheets of corrugated tin ransomed from the ship which washed up on the beach.

After the eggs boiled a few minutes, clattering in the pot, Prince brought them in.

"You want some?" he asked me.

"I guess I'll try one." I remembered when I was younger on the way to West End, passing a native selling a huge loggerhead by the side of the road; the turtle lay on its back with the underside cut out, and eggs floated in a pool of blood in the shell. I reconsidered.

The turtle eggs looked smaller than chicken eggs, with the yoke a deeper, reddish color. They were very soft boiled and runny. Prince broke four or five into each of two glasses. He shook in lots of salt and pepper, then chopped up a hot bird pepper, divided it between the glasses, and stirred them up. He handed me a glass and I watched him gulp his own down in one swallow. I took a deep breath and did the same.

"Can I have some water?" I asked him.

He smiled. "You want some coconut water?"

"Please," I said.

Prince used a long pole with two prongs at the end to pull down a bunch of coconuts from a tree outside his hut. He sat on the ground holding a nut

between his feet, and with a few chops of his machete, carved the husk into a point. With the tip of his machete he broke through the soft spot halfway up the point, and gave it to me. He did a few more and after we had drunk the water, Angela struggling with the big nuts and dribbling on herself, Prince chopped them in half and chopped a sliver of the husk as a spoon for us to eat the jelly. They were young, green coconuts with lots of jelly and sweet water.

"Did you like those turtle eggs?" Angela asked me as we walked together.

"They tasted like flaming fish spit with sand in it."

We walked along the half-moon beach on which Prince had his house, around the bay toward the straight stretch of rocks, an exposed reef, responsible for the island building up behind them round and fat (not long and narrow like the other islands which formed on top of the reefs), and giving the island its name, Gorda Cay. The run from Freeport in our boat took about five hours, and we spent many weekends there. The rocks had a cut wide and deep enough for us to bring the boat through into the bay; but my father was always afraid, so we anchored near the beach on the north side, usually protected, between the rocks and the wrecked ship. The rest of the family went fishing early that morning, but Angela and I wanted to see Prince. I swam into the beach pulling her and the bottle of rum behind me on an air mattress. After the eggs Prince went conching, leaving Angela and me alone on the island. We crossed the narrow strip of mangrove which connected the beach with the rocks, toward the little cove which formed on the other side.

"Look at all those baby fishes," she said. Thousands of minnows and pilchards drifted in clouds, with needle fish darting among them on the surface, and swimming along the rocks, small grunts and mangrove snappers.

"They must come in here to lay their eggs," I said.

"The sting rays too?" She pointed at two skates near the beach.

"Maybe. You want to walk along the rocks?"

"How can we get there?"

"It's only two feet deep."

"I'm afraid of those sting rays," she said.

"What if I give you a piggy-back?"

"O.K." She smiled and I hoisted her onto my back. Angela was eight years old, half my age, and easily half my weight. I carried her to the rocks, shuffling my feet in case any skates lay buried in the sand. We climbed up and started to walk along, the heat so intense it made us dizzy.

The rocks were jagged and sharp, but our feet were hard having gone barefoot most of the summer, so we could pick our way among them without too much trouble. The rocks rose about twenty feet above the water, with dark shades of blue on the deep side, progressing from aquamarine, to navy, to

indigo blues as the water grew deeper, and the sun shining hard and silver and detonating sparks like beads of mercury at one end of the horizon; with the shallow water on the other side of the rocks in shades of blue-green and blue-brown over the grass, and blue-white over the sand, becoming the bright white of the flats and sandbars at the other end of the horizon, with the bold stretch of coral rock, steel-blue and grey, majestically standing in front of us parting the sea.

"They look like hosts," she said. She pointed at the white, round, and flat circles which salt formed in the bottom of small holes in the rock. Prince had told me he collected salt there.

"When I made my First Communion," I said, "I didn't like the taste of the host, so I stuck it to the bottom of the pew."

"I don't believe you."

"Really."

"Didn't anybody see?"

"Sam did, and he started cracking up."

"Didn't you get in trouble?"

"Not for sitting on God, for laughing with Sam."

"Oh," she said.

She walked a little ahead of me as I watched her, stopping every so often to look at something in the rocks. She was tall for her age and very thin, and her legs looked like the outrageously long legs of a sea bird: with all the effort concentrated in the knobby joints, seeming to bend long before the limbs mechanically followed, slowly and smoothly until the feet are plucked with a snap from the ground, like the webbed feet of a duck, walking like a duck walks on suction cups, and sticking each foot back to the ground again, heel first and then the toes gripping firmly, the walk a continuous motion, an awkwardness manipulated with such patient precision that the movement becomes absurdly graceful, as I watched her walking along the rocks a little ahead of me.

She stopped for a few seconds until I caught up. "Do you know how Prince lost his arm?" she asked.

"How?"

"He chopped it off to make stew."

"When did he tell you that?"

"While we cooked the eggs. He said he never used to eat people before he turned black. Because black people are strange like that. And he knows black people that eat all kinds of funny things, like snails, and fish eggs, and chocolate cockroaches."

"How did he turn black?" I asked.

"By getting struck with lightning. And it's true, because he told me that's why he's the only black person in the world with blue eyes. But he said not to worry because he's old now, and he doesn't much feel like eating people any more."

"Lucky for us."

"He said he thinks he'll die pretty soon, and go to heaven so he can be white again. If anything ever happens to him, there'll be no one here to help him."

"He's lived here by himself long enough. And he's still going strong."

"Do you think he's going to die pretty soon?" she asked.

"I think he'll probably live forever."

"Good," she said.

We reached a high point on the rocks, and I turned around to look at our boat. The tide had gone out, settling the water, without even enough breeze to hold the boat on her anchor, leaving the line slack and resting on the bottom. She lay glistening and white, and I thought perfect in the sun — the private, perverted pleasure I took in her, beaming when my father told someone "It's Bobo's boat. He takes care of it. He doesn't even let me on with sandy feet." — as I looked down at her from on top of the rocks.

"They haven't come back from fishing yet," I said.

"They're probably catching lots."

"Lots of nonsense. A thousand puny grunts." I imagined the three of them in the little rubber boat: my mother falling into a spasm of giggles when she got a bite, her too-light-for-anything spinning rod bending in half and the reel whining, Christopher throwing the fish back in when my father looked away, and he with his hand-line (because that's the way *real* Bahamians fish) talking ceaselessly about how he "sure knows how to play those monsters," giving both himself and the minnows far too much credit. And then he would bring them back to the boat and make soup with three or four, and he'd sit down to pick them apart bone by bone, sucking the heads and spitting the eyeballs at Angela, she screaming, and the rest of us thoroughly disgusted. "I wish Dad would take me spearfishing. Then we could get some real fish, maybe some lobster. I'm tired of conch."

"He says you hold your breath too long. If you get a black-out he won't be able to swim down and get you."

"That's for sure," I said. My father only snorkles in knee-deep water, and wears his sneakers. He walks around breathing through his snorkle and squealing, like a walrus with nasal congestion, and when he sees something he bends over and puts his head under the water to look at it.

When we reached the end of the rocks, we turned and started back again toward the beach. We stopped to look in a pool of water carved out of the rock.

There were crabs, brittle stars, and tiny fish in the pool.

"What are those wormy things?" She pointed at several leech-like animals in the pool; their hard, intricate coverings were segmented and overlapped in spirals.

"They're curbs," I told her. "The Bahamians eat them."

"But they're hard." She tried to pull one off.

"They eat the undersides. You need a knife to pry them off the rocks."

"No wonder," she said.

"The water must come all the way up here to fill this pool."

"What do the curlie-tails do?" she asked. "They can't swim, can they?" One stood watching us.

"Probably not very well." The lizard's tail made two or three curls over its back, like a grandiose headdress. They were plump, lazy lizards, and their cumbersome tails made them look ridiculous running, like a woman with oversized breasts, so they walked slowly, lustfully swishing their tails.

"Remember when I used to keep one in a box?" she said. "A big, fat one."

"That was pretty gross," I said. "I don't know how you ever touched it." I remembered her carrying around the lizard, as long as her forearm and so fat she could hardly get her hand around it. She fed the curlie-tail leftovers as if it were a Great Dane.

"But I would never touch one of those with the exploding orange thing." She pointed at a chameleon, long and thin like a snake, which we had startled; it held its head high in the air, with the fire-orange pouch under its chin bursting forth rhythmically.

"You know, when I was your age, I dumped a bunch of old spray cans into the incinerator during school clean up, and almost exploded the second grade. Flaming cans rained down all over the school."

"Didn't you get in trouble?"

"Nobody knew it was me. And everybody was talking about it, and I had to agree whoever did it was pretty dumb."

We reached the small cove, and I took her on my back again across to the beach. We crouched and soaked in the shallow water, heated by the sun to such an extent it hardly felt refreshing.

"Let's go back to the boat," I said.

"You promised you'd collect shells with me."

"I can't take this heat any more. And you should get inside before you get sunstroke."

"Come on," she begged.

"I'll leave the air mattress here, and you can swim out to the boat in a while. But don't stay long, all right?"

"O.K.," she said.

After I swam out to the boat I fell asleep, exhausted from the sun, sleeping until my parents woke me a few hours later.

"Where's Angela?" my mother asked.

"What do you mean?"

"Where is she?" my father demanded.

"I told her. . . ." I looked at the beach, seeing the orange air mattress exactly where I'd left it. "I told her to swim out to the boat in a little while."

"What?"

"I left the air mattress for her. It's only twenty yards."

"When was that?" he asked.

"I guess about two."

"You realize it's nearly five o'clock? Has she been in the sun all day?"

"I'm going to look for her." I jumped up.

I swam into the beach and started toward the point where she usually went to collect shells, calling for her as I walked. The beach was about two miles long, and I trudged as fast as I could through the soft sand. I walked as far as the end of the beach without any sign of her. Gorda Rock lay just off the point, connected to the island by sandbars. I walked out to the small island and called for her, then started back along the beach toward the boat. As I grew more nervous, I called her name louder. What if she did get sunstroke? She'd been out in it all day. And you never know what kind of people you might find on these deserted islands. Some native could have even raped her. I knew I shouldn't have left her. Why the hell didn't I make her come in? I began to run in the loose sand. By the time I reached the boat I was drenched in sweat, and felt to pass out from exhaustion. The air mattress lay in the same spot. As I ran by I kicked it into the weeds. Where the hell is she? "Please God," I said aloud. "Please God make her all right." I continued running through the sand, sweating, around the cove next to the rocks, through the strip of mangrove, and along the beach in front of Prince's hut. It looked abandoned, Prince out conching, so I continued to run down the beach. I ran to the end, a mile away. Where the hell is she? Oh God. I found Prince's dingy, anchored in front of his hut. I hadn't seen it running past. I took off again toward the hut, and burst in. "Prince!" I yelled.

"He's dead," she cried. "He's dead. I found some on the beach, and I wanted to show him, and I tried to wake him up, and I shook him, and shook him, but he's dead."

She sat in a bundle on the ground next to his bed. I picked her up and held her against me, so tight and she so frail, I nearly crushed her, the two of us crying on one another.

I saw the empty bottle on the ground, and the cat's bowl next to it upside

down; he must have finished that off too. And Prince lying on the car seat, some of the mosquito netting pulled down on top of him, looking like he might very well be dead.

"He's not dead," I told her quietly. "He passed out. From the rum. But he's all right. I promise."

She looked up at me and smiled. And she grabbed my hand and pulled me out of the hut, along the path which led to the beach, pulling me with all her strength, crying, laughing out loud. She picked up one of the struggling newborn turtles and handed it to me.



Closing Down

For the Perkins Library Reference Department

*where a sea eagle rings its glass voice
above us, I remember myself back there*

—Galway Kinnell

1.

Even pouring the morning milk,
you rehearse how your hands will move
for the last time in a familiar place.

Your head bows under an arc
of light which draws to you
the humility of daybreak.

What has been good for you
and for others now finds rest,
but these final days

run a shock through you
with a force you revere
but do not understand.

2.

Perhaps parting comes easier
if you exit from the side,
dressed for mime.

Everyone will imagine
your return after an intermission
of sipping strawberry sodas.

You may even fool yourself.
It is like slipping out
the back door of your house

so neighbors will think
you are asleep.
They will be quiet for nothing.

3.

In sleep, conversations
held a month ago will fly
wildly back into memory,

and you might awaken hoping
for hard rain to flood the fierce
burden separation knows.

But from friends at whose sides
you have learned well,
you will not stray far.

Like an origami bird
you are ready to fold
into a design not yet tried.

In The Event of Fire or Flood

For Elizabeth & Louis Auld

After you check doors and stove,
after you shed flannel robe
and store your slippers for the night,
there is something more.

You must grope for the box
beside your bed, the one waiting
to be filled only with things
from which you never could be parted.

Now many nights, for months
since the house of good friends blazed
while they dreamed, you have taught yourself
to bring sleep by listing

possessions to bear in your arms.
And each night the list changes:
wedding dress, your first black stuffed puppy,
the violin made in 1685.

But sleep falls heavy, a velvet curtain
in the theatre, and before early light rises,
peculiar shadows that move over your face assure
no amount of readiness will promise you safety.

George K. Wayten

In the night you are Adam

In the night you are Adam.
Naked, yet shrouded in darkness,
Molded and defined by shadow.

Breath, pulse, a stirring of the hand.
And you were shaped
From lifeless earth.

Your face, asleep now, is
Without frown or scar,
Much like first man's
Before the end of Eden.
Only he lay in golden luminescence
And your peace comes after a
Struggle at joy.

And I have brought you this peace,
I, who brought you the darkness
Shining in my hand.



White Triangles

White triangles splotch the lawn—
a broken tessellation, blinding bright.
I've found it much too easy
to squint at the light, one crack
here or there.

One eye shut, I drift from shade
to shade. The leaves are crystal green,
tree trunks like rocks. I have been lost
under the weight of sturdy, sprawling
branches.

They press and angle perfectly,
as if in a dream—
the underground curve,
the curve to expect.

Hard branches knock and clatter
into the torturer's ceiling,
sinking with slow force.
Slowly, heavily cracking new cavities,
they ladder down.

(It has been impossible
to prance around in the open day.
I jump, dodging crossbars.)

Upstream

Near the river bank I am pulled
in a canoe through dark, thick water.
My forearms ache sweetly
like cowards. The mat
darkness embosoms our boat.
So weighted, furrowing through
the slow shadows, she tows me.
"All of you," I want to unhorse
but the sound blinks out against the looming shade.
The tightest petal folds
over itself in dark that closes, closes.
"You," I tongue an apology, forgetting itself.

Construction II

But to extract and delineate the familiar curve,
the eidetic shape, pure color—
it is, given sleep, the construction of dreams,
details strung like household wares.

(My wide-awake dream is the bright
objects smashed.
I see sweetest brown, flat and spreading,
a birthmark. The mess appears from underneath
behind a plate of glass.)

The objects remain always
eye to eye blankly, curving their own snug territory.
How to lift one
like a tart delicacy, candied fruit and mint leaf,
is the burden of monks
hunched over black fields.



To My Father

I

Two are missing:
a 1949-S and a 1957-D. The rest
are here, from 1946 on—the year after
the war ended and they decided
to put FDR on the dime.
You got them all, almost, except
for those two. They stop at '68
and I was only seven
but I can still see you,
silver and copper spread out around you,
pushing coins into little blue folders.

This one you started for me
years ago, when I was too little
to understand why.
Now there are blank round holes
for the last twelve years.

Thank God they're still putting Roosevelt
on the dime. Daddy, you left
a lot of space to fill.

2

That summer I was six,
I nearly scratched myself
to death—poison ivy and mosquito bites,
chiggers buried in my flesh:
clearing spaces, hauling off
weeds and vines, climbing each tree
before you chopped it down.

Hot nights, the kitchen
light burned. I sat,
bare legs hung over the countertop.
The world went smooth and cool,
you painting my body with calamine.

I asked twice
if you would've rather had a son.

3

Once we met an artist.
He knew you and sketched your
little girl for free. Big eyes and bangs,
parts of you in charcoal.

They say I am the one most like you,
but I've forgotten who that is:
bare shoulders, high heels, nylon jersey
slinks across thigh.

That artist: if he painted me now,
it wouldn't be for free.
I wonder if you'd pay for it.

Louise Lergenmiller

When the Sunday afternoon sun aims a slant-eyed glance
 through lead-latticed windows,
And the Father drones on of how we are to be lights
 to the world...

I think of looking at the night city from far away,
 watching it rot in a mire of glowing light;
And of how the cool sand slips through my fingers
 like the white flesh of a woman,
Of the way her eyes (when she's shocked)
 gleam like two great silver clasps. . .

I raise my head as the droning stops;
 tiny organ notes wilt on the air,
And rise and die in tangled wood rafters.



Four Dreams, Four Wakings: A Poem

I

I dreamed this:

Your house. Full day through unshaded windows. Strangers gathering your possessions, dropping them into soiled sacks. And you? Invisible at least. Dead? Helpless captive? What? I don't know. Simply absent. And I? Watching but powerless, from above—frustrated hands clawing inches-thick glass, hollow shouts echoed unheard. We are so frail.

Only waking spares sanity.

Finally calm, the dream speaks this: Know this as warning. Go where you are needed.

I hear its message. I will protect you the rest of my days.

II

Ernest, you called last night.

You were old, near death (I knew. Did you? Truly?), white receding hair combed straight forward to cover the space, stark beard framing weathered features, your big body caving in on itself. Why did you arrive like that?

We talked long hours in your house on the mountain, scanned broad vistas, shared common secrets, holding them close against the babbling voices always on the perimeter. We kept them off awhile, didn't we? But was the defense worth the effort? Was the cargo whose weight we shared that valuable?

When the voices finally closed in, you left suddenly. I tried to hold you, can still feel your weak yet resolute struggle against the embracing circle of my arms. How did you get free? Where did you go?

Return. Take me with you. Don't leave me alone.

Real waking grants this—he didn't leave, won't ever; you can save each other.

III

Joan slept soundly.

She dreamed of walking through fields—summer fields, all greenness and thick odor—that were boundless, flat stretching far as she could see, no border of trees, no brook winding. The expanse exhilarated her and she ran about, jumping, turning cartwheels in air soft as goose feathers. It was so kind, this life. Then her consciousness left her body and rose till high above and looking down on the now mindless figure still dancing. From above it was obvious—the girl was alone, dwarfed by endless flat field, threatened with extinction by the sheer mass of empty space, utter loneliness. Mind rejoined body and the happy dance became a frantic search for exit. She picked a direction—it didn't matter which, all horizons identical—started running and kept at it, soon gasping but running still, afraid of what it would mean to stop. Miles later and no change—sun, green fields. She was fast losing strength, wanted to scream but found her shouts cut short, forced back into her lungs by the weight of air oozing about her. Suddenly she was falling, had reached a rise and was rolling downhill out of control. The fall was gentle enough, cushioned by grass, soft earth; but the confusion ached, the world endlessly tumbling and she powerless to stop it. A tree halted her and she lay against its trunk, stared into full-leaved branches, huge sky beyond, waiting for calm. She closed her eyes, then opened them to find the tree turned to a man. He stooped, picked her up in his strong arms, and carried her to safety—dark rooms with walls, finite space.

Joan woke gently in the middle of the night. She recalled no dream but felt wonderfully safe. She rose, went to the bathroom, then returned to bed, still harbored in the peace she'd felt on waking. It was then she noticed the sheets tangled in wild knots, the pillow damp with sweat. She puzzled over that for only a moment before straightening the sheets, flipping the pillow, and returning to sleep, dreamless sleep this time, the night's second gift.

IV

I am sure it is near.

The massive blank of sleep offers this clue—a saving message is at hand but hidden. My eyes open, my body responds, searching the bed in dense dark, rising to prow the floor, run begging hands along barren walls. Nothing, nothing.

Then this—the message is borne by a human, the messenger is present. I speak a name, then words, shouted—"Where?" "Help me." No response. I

move through the rooms, turning on lights, checking behind doors, calling, asking. Fruitless endeavor.

Then this—the message waits in your books. I search every volume in the prickling glare of desk light, stack each failure neatly to one side, examine the next. The lifeless pages yield only words—thousands, millions.

Wearied, pressed into surrender, I lie down and sleep. No dream. No hope of rescue.

Morning bathes the rooms in caressing glow, reveals lamps still shining, doors ajar, books piled. I rise, restore order, and continue the search with each further step, each further breath, the waking search no less desperate, no more real than the dreaming one, though conscious now and hopeful.

Melody Ivins

The Man Who Lives in the Morgue

If Memorial Hospital Mortuary
Is the land of the dead, then Hades
Wears a buttoned white coat, smokes a briar,
Vacations twice yearly in Tampa.
His colleagues split dead ones in tightly locked rooms,
Unlayer the tissues, take measures, bottle
Brain slices, uncover the truth.
Hell itself, save for occasional wafts
Of foul air, is unhumanly clean.

And Charon, who keeps all the keys
On a ring, Charon who meets the slow late ambulance
Holding a bad one. . .his name's really
Kelly. A handsome young man with black hair,
Who plays twelve-string, works days
In a restaurant, and sometimes has girls up to visit
His windowless room.



Apple Tree

1

Inside a kaleidoscope of shimmering greens
I hold my breath and listen to the breeze
That every instant fresh shifts all the lights
On every shape and murmurs something soft.
About me here and there the fruit hangs ripe,
Great, glistening rubies in a green-glass world,
As exquisite as blown-glass Christmas balls,
And I seek out a bough, a curving rib
That makes a nestling place just at the trunk
Where I may feast, exultant, far from earth.
But at my back there comes a rapping sharp.
I twist to see a kitchen window pane
Loom full of figures stern, admonishing.
Have I done wrong? Rap, rap. What have I done?
Should I have known? Rap, rap. Of course, I'll mind!
I scramble down and scrape and scratch my legs.
The tree itself has punishments for me.
Forgive us our trespasses, apple tree!

2

I know that something must be wrong here now.
 His eyes grow watery, his cheeks glow red,
 Who has the brightest smile I've ever seen.
 We both have helped to catch and carry out
 Two big-eyed wary rabbits from their cage,
 All warm and soft inside our cradling arms,
 As gentle and bewildered as the sheep
 An old man rode one day to make us smile.
 With cords about their stiff hind legs, they hang
 Upon the lowest bough of that same tree,
 With big glass eyes unblinking, watching still,
 While glistening rubies bubble from their necks
 And spatter, blackening slowly at our feet.
 He's gone inside now, gentler far than I,
 As if his extra years had done no good,
 While I stay here to watch, still thrilled and safe.
 Above our tree, a hemisphere of sky;
 Together, beneath it, the rabbits and I.

3

Oh, *summum bonum*! Rare and precious fruit!
 Remembered childhood tree of shining spheres,
 From Ate or from Adam, none knows now.
 The blackened earth from which it living springs
 Must hold the clue, but so must other things.
 The sun's bright eye is shattered by each branch.
 The breezes riffle, puzzling, through the leaves.
 The shadow Raymond cast perplexes still.
 My throat is slit a thousand times and more
 And bleeding still and rocking on the bough
 I try to piece together glints of glass
 To see if anywhere the mosaic leaves
 A little room for understanding it,
 At least for glimpsing why all trespassers,
 Who never seem to have a chance, must be
 Drawn, hanged, and ever quartered by this tree.

Hermann Hesse

Summer Evening

My fingers write a poem here,
Magnolia pale looks through the window;
in the glass, wine's dark colors glow;
they mirror the loved one's face and hair.

Summer night scatters thin stars far away,
Memories in magnolias lit by the moon.
My fingers, we shall be mold and dust—soon,
Day after tomorrow—tomorrow—perhaps today.

Return

Now for a long time I have been
in foreign lands as guest,
and yet no healing have I seen,
no healing and no rest.

I sought in every village
for solace to the soul,
now I have grown stiller
and willing to pay the toll.

Come here, old pain, old friend,
'tis tired I am of the jest.
Come, let us struggle again,
struggle breast to breast.

These previously unpublished poems by Hermann Hesse were written about 1920. They have been translated from the German by Herman Salinger, Professor Emeritus of Germanic Languages at Duke. Hesse's major novels include Steppenwolf, Demian, and Siddhartha. Salinger is a well-known poet and translator.

Hi 1940 Past Midnight Now

one evening
when located down in
the dumps, stark-raving television
lauren bacall! the sweetheart of eyes
slim reckons with romance like a mason's hot white ideal
pitching dirt & weary of fascist terrors (me too)
in a room softly lit
american amber mid xxth sepia yes!
home-eee
by the dim call of love the radio reels you in
she strikes a plan, hot
nazi-stomp first, love afterwards
a victory garden come true
thirty years gone
a young girl too girl fierce to flash love
one pulse of the moving screen
in, then out,
this love is cast in fire
thirty years later
it paves my room

6:00 am
camden, maine

**the dictionary is the only gun
we keep loaded in the house**

girls are the brightest fire hydrants
& here in the oily heat & summer
even the firemen are susceptible
to desire



Notes on Contributors

Jeffrey Anderson studied two years at Yale, spent three years in Boston, and is a senior at Duke. He has studied with Reynolds Price.

Bob Antoni has studied with Alan Gurganus and Reynolds Price.

Dorothy Aronson, a senior from Philadelphia, is an accounting major and business manager for Hoof 'n' Horn and Duke Players.

John Bernstein is an assistant professor in the English Department and Duke's playwright-in-residence.

Cynthia Camlin enjoys painting and writing poetry, and will be studying art in France next semester.

Chris Caryl is from Midland, Texas.

Sharon Funderburk is from Union County, N.C.

Rikki Garni is a musician living on Caswell Place with uninvited animals.

Donna Gregory is a junior psychology and studio art major from Naples, Florida.

Brenda Hofman, a junior in Trinity College, would like to be a poet/lawyer.

Raisin Horn works in the cataloging department in Perkins Library, and has an M.A. in creative writing from Hollins College.

Melody Ivins is an English major at UNC. She reads for *Cellar Door* and *The Carolina Quarterly*.

Donna Jackson is a junior transfer from the University of Delaware, studying writing and photography.

Louise Lergenmiller is a freshman from Atlanta, Ga.

Kevin Nance has had new poems in *Poet Lore* and *Other Voices in American Poetry*, an anthology.

Beth Quigley is a studio art and psychology major who aspires to a career in art in which she can confront the complexity and mystery of life with sensitivity and a sense of humor.

Dale Randall teaches in the English Department at Duke.

Francis Rivers is a resident of Durham.

Herman Salinger is Professor Emeritus of Germanic Languages and Comparative Literature, and a well-known poet and translator.

Haun Saussy, a comparative literature and Greek major, has recently returned from a cycling trip through Europe.

Mark Scott is a Trinity senior taking liberties.

Kim Still is a junior English major from Charlotte, N.C.

Virginia Tyler is a studio art and PPS major, and works in the Art Museum.

George K. Wayten likes trivia, cryptograms, and poetry.

Pharibe Wise is a "Mainer" who spends most of her time sailing or horseback riding.

"Where is human nature so weak as in the bookstore?"

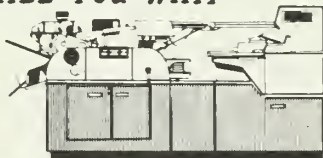
-Henry Ward Beecher



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The Archive has moved from its location in Union Tower to the East Campus Center, Room 203. Office hours are generally Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8-10 PM, though other times can be arranged via appointment. The new office phone number is 684-5880.

In late March and early April, *The Archive* will sponsor the Blackburn Literary Festival. The festival has a long tradition of bringing prominent authors to the campus and community. Past readers have included Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Bishop, W.S. Merwin, Howard Nemerov, and Allen Ginsberg. Negotiations for the 1981 Blackburn Literary Festival are currently underway, and James Dickey has been tentatively scheduled to appear. Mr. Dickey is one of the major figures in American poetry, as well as the author of *Deliverance*.

Patrons for the Blackburn Festival and the Spring issue of *The Archive* are urgently needed. There are three separate brackets of patronage: (1) up to \$15—Patron; (2) \$15-25—Supporter; (3) over \$25—Sponsor. The names of patrons will be listed on a special page in the magazine. All donations are tax deductible, and can be mailed to Box 4665, Duke Station, Durham, N.C. 27706.





The Archive

The Archive

Spring 1981

The Archive

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Editor: **George Witte**

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The Archive

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Announcements

The Archive proudly announces the Newman Ivey White Award for literature. It will be awarded each semester to the Duke undergraduates with the best samples of poetry and fiction in *The Archive*. The judges were selected from the University community by the Gothic Bookshop. The names of judges may not be made public.

The prize consists of a \$50 gift certificate to be used at any of the Duke University Stores.

*

Newman Ivey White graduated from Trinity College in 1931 and taught at Duke University from 1919 to 1948. He edited with W.C. Jackson *An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes* (1924) and *American Negro Folk Songs* (1928). In 1943, he became general editor of the Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore.

Newman Ivey White was a noted scholar on Shelley and published many works, among them an anthology, *The Best of Shelley* (1932), *The Unextinguished Hearth: Shelley and His Contemporary Critics* (1938), a two-volume biography, *Shelley* (1940), and *Portrait of Shelley* (1945).



Shapes

for June Arlinghaus

Though the sitar's drone warms
the banquet hall, all colors
fall mute: the long pale instrument,
the linen smooth on our table,
spicy Papar shaped by the dark hands
of Indian women.

Only your hair, the bittersweet
shade of wild yams, is caught
by rectangles of light that cross
the room like small waves.

For the plums, peacock blues,
the avocados and brilliant
reds of the dancers' dresses
seem wan as, at your side,
the father of the child you carry
rests his hand for a long while
on the perfect melon of your belly.

He will wait
with great patience for a sign
of a journey travelled.

Even now as you wait,
I wait with you.

William: Rising to the Heat

In Lubbock, Texas, the heat in summer
Is thick like fog, and presses down
Like a foot on helpless ants.
On the edge of town, in a box-of-a-room
At the Red Star Inn, William wakes to the heat
Of the afternoon, and curses it.

He shifts his sweating body,
Searches for coolness among damp sheets.
He lies motionless, and
Thinks of a woman he has not seen in months.
He remembers the words, the arguments:
She always did the shouting.
Perhaps he should have shouted back,
Slapped her, just once.
But he couldn't have.

The thoughts go on. Weave themselves
Into William's mind, cling and grow like
Cobwebs. He has thought of it all before,
Every reason she has to hate him.
William knows.

There in the little room, in the heat,
William wishes he were dying.
Dying somehow before her eyes,
Maybe then she would listen and understand.
Her hatred would change
Like fabric dyed from blue to green;
Everything would change.

The sweat trickles from his body,
And William knows too it will never happen.
He is not dying, he will go on.
They, the two of them, will go on
Like insects caught in a web, fixed apart,
Different threads in a cloth.

William rises to the heat,
To a sandwich and a cigarette,
He rises knowing,
Her life is unraveling more quickly than mine.



Acute Mania

Persephone, you are now
at a small table, smoking without conviction
between three sad girls' faces tanned with powder
(there aren't any windows). The door, of glass,
faces your back and hair. Your head's
jiggling slightly between two jolly landscapes
(pines and waterfall, a sleigh and bells)
—one corner ripped. Should you look over here?
I keep quiet and watch fluorescent light
siphon blood from your smoking hand.
Whether or not you borrow the girls' ochre
I'm sure you'll have to smile at one, at least,
of your doctors, and gradually
come to hear the snowbells in their tiny night.
As soon as you nod, and open
your mouth, I can only keep you half the year
from the seeds you are now counting in your palm.

Two Poems

1. Past Midnight

Too close, your breath is a surprise,
though conversational. A light burnt out
has pitched its small domain around the exit.
I drink, becoming liquid, and watch this.

When you retreat and break the pointed flow
of radiance spilled on the pool table
(quiet, where four gray hands fly after four whites)
I trace your arm's edge in the lit sleeve, and think

I will take you to the small house of two shadows' crossing
where our night forms an obelisk: just as easily
my body spread across evening glass
at the light's flicking becomes trees and yard.

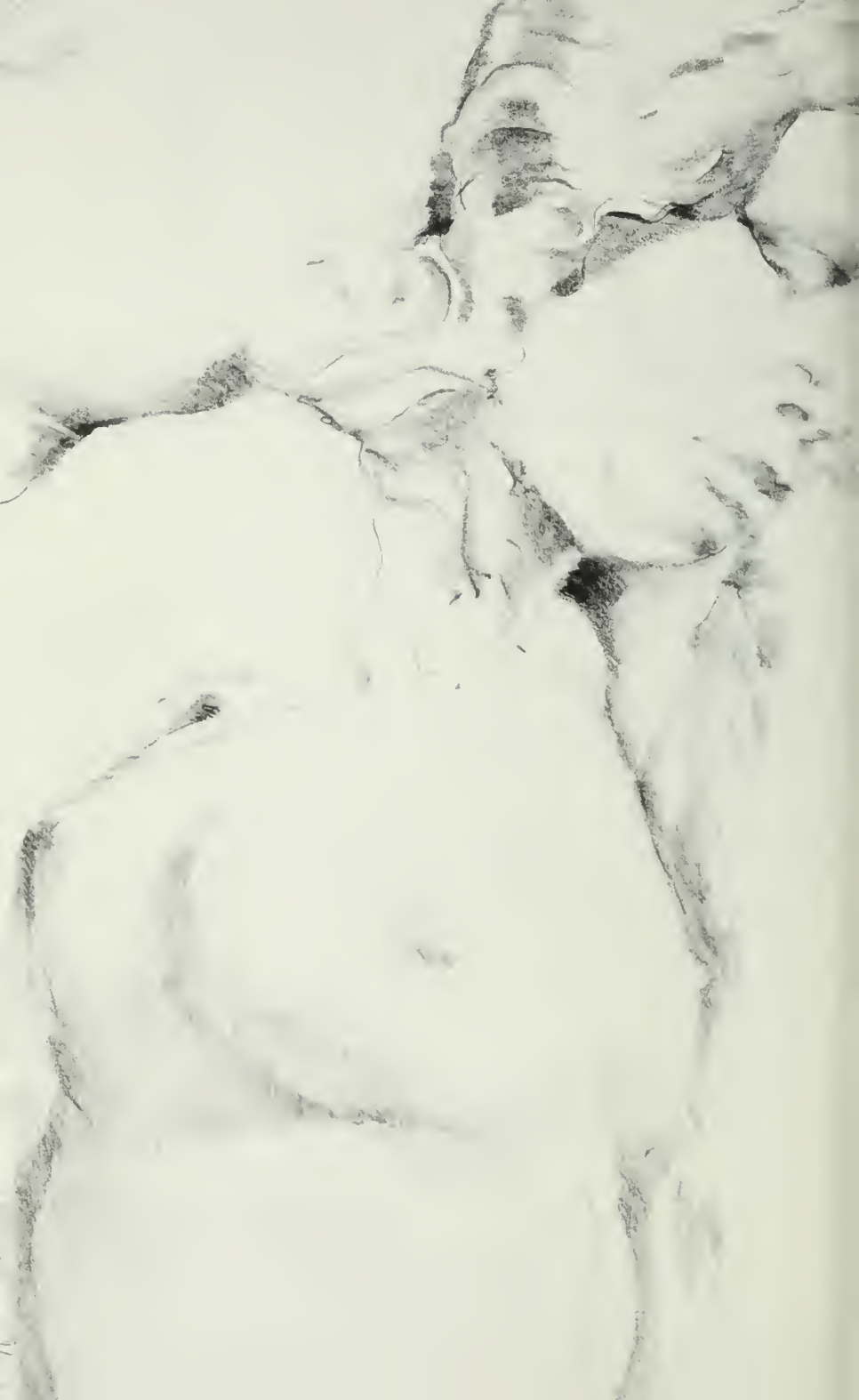
2. Poison Ivy

Pale chest: the night roof holds him in a double
shadow, close to the corner, pyramid.
Something breaks his sleep and both hands reach
down to track his thigh with new marks,
wherever the shining leaves have brushed. Only
occasionally a white vestige errs upon
the current of new flesh infusing the old.

Silence again, he shifts to lie on his side,
shoes under one ear; an orange's skin scattered
in chips on the gravel. "You drove. I watched

my knuckles spotting (in my lap two crabs
laced tighter in the rant of quick highway wind).
You leaned and clipped the Spanish station.
Without much to say
we went on sundering those pines."

Wind in the dark, and his book exposes a page:
—Then my best companions standing nearby
tied me tighter with more and more ropes, and
when we at last had left those two behind
and were out of their voices' range, then
my men cleaned their ears of beeswax
and unwound me from the ropes.
And when Odysseus
stepped free from the mast, they saw his belly covered
with a slick green skin,
the skin of bronze statues which stand in fountains.



Twisting the Faucet

I cannot
twist the faucet dry.
I hear the water dripping,
but cannot get up again—
two times
I put bed warm feet
onto a frozen floor,
and felt the chapped soles
cracking.
Let it drip all night.

You lied when you said
you could fix these things,
that your hands
would hide the sound
of water crying,
smacking porcelain.

Momentarily I catch your breath
from where you sent it
into the pillow all winter.
Like a covered well,
it still echoes there.
Now the water will repeat.
Breathe.
Repeat.

Winter at Nags Head, 1980

Gliding over
black specks in the ice, I spin,
singular, my right foot
in unison with my left.
I chose this bay,
where beach cold hermits me.
There are no crowds.
Here; my woodstove and sweaters,
and these good shoes
I keep on nights—
that by day gloss ice like seacLOUDS,
and ignore bumps of shell shatter,
frozen sometimes in a second
of night freeze.
Small clots
of foam and beach stone
indent my numbing feet.
I slide back,
over ice to a beach house on stilts,
waiting for me.
I live here with my firewood.
God, that they
could take off these shoes,
and warm my feet
like two old palms.

Watching Suzanne at the Window, Waiting for Jacob

The sun's path
crept up the length of her extended fingers,
her pointed neck—
she stepped closer, into the light—
became a blurr in the moment of glare,
and then seemed human again,
as white sun settled through her hands,
as they smoothed quickly down
the front of her cotton shift.
The scent of oranges was part of her;
rose from the heat beating
in the window's ledge,
on their ripened rinds.
They seemed to curl their peeling mist into her,
her lemon-white baby's breath hair,
in small milk-dust clusters,
magnetizing the light.
Inaudible air built on her lips,
her slight lungs jutted out
against the warmth of the pane,
and settled to the lulling movement
of her long fingers,
bringing pieces of orange to her lips,
breaking their honeyed sacs to her teeth.
Two o'clock, three,
Jacob was coming, slowly.
She was in a glass case,
waiting,
not to be touched.

Marion Salinger

No Touching Down

It was a fair day in the Seychelles
when we came in low enough to sight the *vert* outlines
and remained high enough
to keep the clouds about our shoulders.
We did not land and did not need to choose
among the thirty paradises.
Suspended, appended, we were our own islands
and did not descend to tax
the carrying capacity of their darling biospheres,
shearing the rain forests
or frightening the coral communities.

At that height we existed at no one's expense
and renewed ourselves indefinitely.



The Swimmer

1

In my father's photo you are
Esther Williams bronzed over, the cool jangle
of your bathing cap and smile
archaic and loose as you pose.
A mirror-splash lingers in your face.
You were in love, with water and a man,
and I can see you afterwards slip back
into your lake, a patch of ripples
cleaved by a white, levering arm.

2

Ten years later you have moved.
In Texas you have discovered water's true miracle
in its existence.
Your regular nightly breathing is blurred
by the high-tide of dust, the fine seeping wind
that forces your house's chinks, and drapes a fine
mesh of dunes on the bathroom porcelain.

In your sleep the tracery grows
through every room, leadening the air
to the point where, twenty years later,
you brush yourself off.

3

Today you face my face,
this nose and hair you built from blown-out sand

and spill in your soup.
Your tears have filtered down
through thirty years, like colors
of the late-day sun distended
in the sediments of the air.

You moved again, a new husband—you fish
and shell, treasure your small river
like a wedding band, and envy your skiff's buoyancy,
recalling the implacable weight

of your child's eye, his pupil one bright fleck
in the ash-softness that clings to the rinds
of your dreaming, that crests
and breaks at the pull of the moon,
choking and beige.

Listening, a pause comes in from the sea.

Fish and Game: Two Scenes

1. Catching Bluegills

When we wheeled you through San Angelo
you never even coughed at the Penney's
or the Mexican mothers out shopping
or the clutches of flat-haired rednecks.
Your spokes confused the air.
You devoted yourself to bodily functions.

Old toy-seller, father of my dad, let me know
what you were thinking as you let the afternoon
bleed your face's color thin. Your neck strained
above its collar as your split lenses
layered dual suns on the water.

Carefully kneading cool phlegm with your tongue
you felt my line go down, wire-thin,
like a suture through the silty glimmer.
All that you had left to feel was your pulse
bleeding your wattle with a neurasthenic urge.

You heard round hollerings in your ear.
Hooked, riveted, the small fish stammered,
pinned on the river like butterflies.
Bluegills had bellies of pewter, their colors
pumped and faded in your hand.

I remember exactly thirty-three pairs
of their eyes in the flat frozen baggie.

Each eye was a taxidermist's plastic button,
cloudy and pliant. Your Midwesterner's nasal tones
flattened out, thinking of their folks at home.

You digested, nonetheless, whole families
with no esophagal qualms. After the meal
you hoarded hard candies in your lower jaw,
and the last air you gave out was shot through
with orange, an eye-popping sweet liqueur
unrolling through the lamplight.

2. Friday Morning Ambuscade in a Pecan Orchard Outside of Victoria, Texas

My brother breathes softly
in the whiskey-glowing cold.
His camouflage jacket, his wool shirt
crackle when he moves an arm.
The breeze is halfway there, what of it
there is in his face, and the morning
just rising.

Beyond the matting of his blind
light breaks silver against higher branches.
Shadows on their scalps, forty deer
browse through the muffled clatter and grind
of their own eating. Breakfast
in the orchard, but my brother's
had none,
and somewhere in his gut
his jacket, his rye-lit veins,
a bubble swells, thick as clay
clear as starlight, and rises
through each layer of sweat and cloth
to his eyes. It prickles like the cold,
like the air of space.

My brother pulls in breath.
Chewing from side to side, serene,
the buck raises his rack
into a bar of sun. His muzzle's content
with a pecan mash and a seraglio of does.

 In the cool gray field of my brother's scope
each whisker on that snout gleams with moisture.
When it's time my brother leans into the view
with an easy trigger-pull and breaks the silence
over his head. The bubble is gone, the herd
starts as one deer, wheels, but the buck heaves forward
into a thicket, throwing deerspit on the leaves.

 Gill-netted, lashed in brush, he lifts
his rack into awnings of green, his fetlocks
jammed with blood, and spits again,
bibbing himself with red
as he drops one shoulder
 to the ground.

My brother's still alive, without struggle.
The beauty is the deer's.
My brother swigs, and walks forward.
The air is still faintly nutty—
not bitter almonds, but as sweet
as my godmother's pecan pie.
There isn't a deer in the orchard, now.

The Hutterites

They kill chickens in the special shed
each August. It's newly renovated:
stainless sinks to drain
away the blood, and sturdy racks
for hanging up the carcasses.

In the corner is the Machine
they love best.
A plump young girl with braids
the color of soil explains—
the tub is from a washing machine.
The rubber fingers inside pull out
all except their pinfeathers;
just throw a dead bird in
and it works.

Her eyes brighten as she tells
us of her world.
She shows her hands—the wedding band
seems like part of her skin.
She mentions that her hands
have been much smoother since
The Machine has done the plucking.

We photograph her with her sisters:
some are older, some are children yet,
but all are anxious to be photographed.
They extract our promise
to return next week with copies
of their picture, and as we drive away
they laugh and wonder
over city ways.



Those Men, So Powerful (Ci mezczyzni, tak potezni)

Those men, so powerful, always shown
somewhat from below by crouching cameramen, who lift
a heavy foot to crush me, no, to climb
the steps of a plane, who raise a hand
to strike me, no, to greet the crowds
obediently waving little flags, those who sign
my death sentence, no, just a trade
agreement which is promptly dried by a servile blotter,

those men so brave, with such upturned brows
standing in an open car, who
with such courage visit the battle-line of the harvest, who
set their foot in a furrow as though entering a trench,
those men with a hard hand capable of banging on the lectern
of the rostrum and slapping on the shoulder
people bent in obeisance who just a moment ago were pinned
to their black suits with a medal.

always
you were so afraid of them
you were so small
compared to them, who always stood above
you, on steps, rostrums, platforms,
and yet it is enough for just one second to stop
being afraid, let's say:
to start being afraid a little less,
to become convinced that they are the ones,
that they are the ones who are most afraid.

Tortures (Tortury)

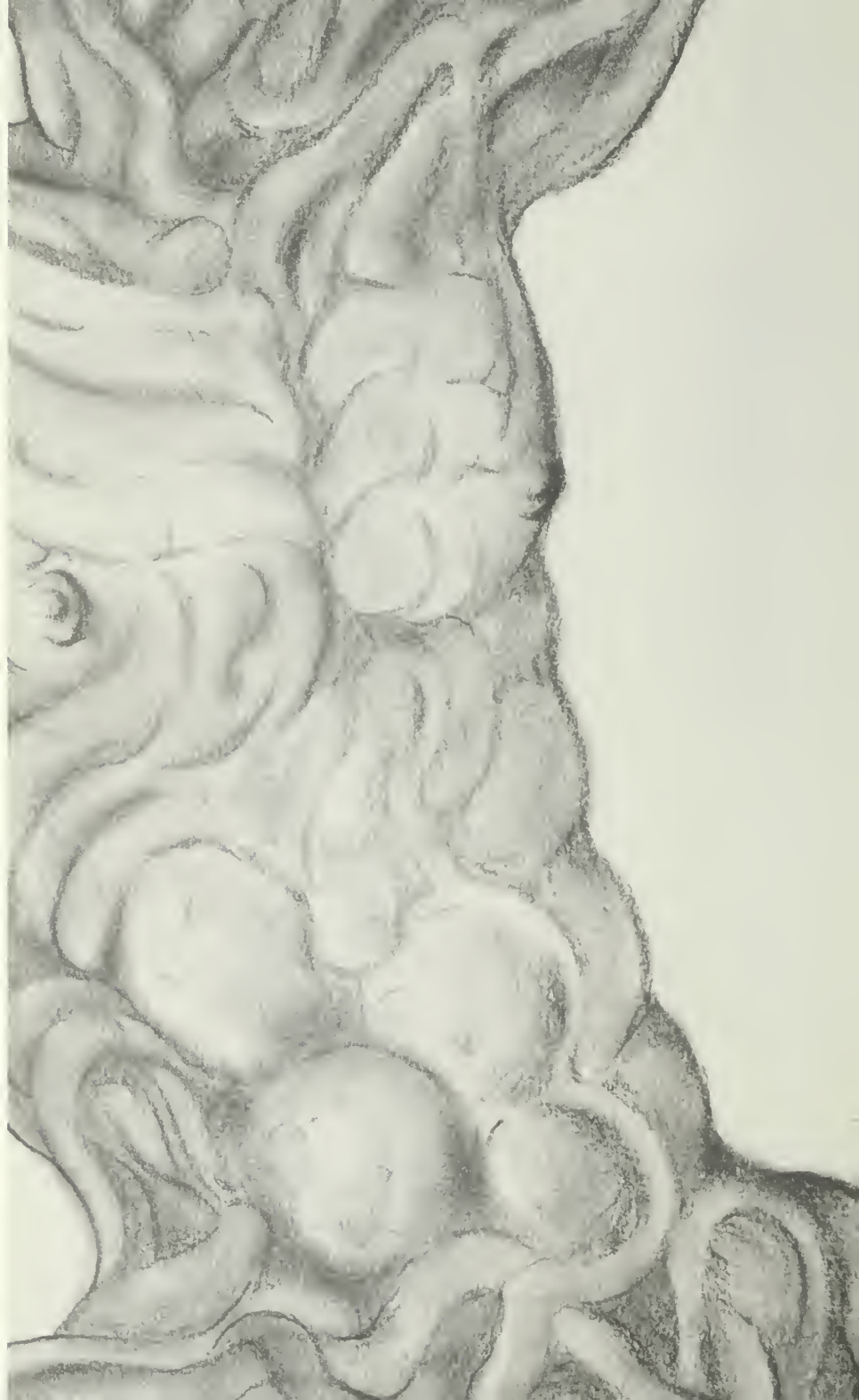
Nothing has changed.
The body is susceptible to pain,
it must eat and breathe air and sleep,
it has thin skin and blood right underneath,
an adequate stock of teeth and nails,
its bones are breakable, its joints are stretchable.
In tortures all this is taken into account.

Nothing has changed.
The body shudders as it shuddered
before the founding of Rome and after,
in the twentieth century before and after Christ.
Tortures are as they were, it's just the earth that's grown smaller,
and whatever happens seems right on the other side of the wall.

Nothing has changed.
It's just that there are more people,
besides the old offenses new ones have appeared,
real, imaginary, temporary, and none,
but the howl with which the body responds to them,
was, is and ever will be a howl of innocence
according to the time-honored scale and tonality.

Nothing has changed.
Maybe just the manners, ceremonies, dances.
Yet the movement of the hands in protecting the head is the same.
The body writhes, jerks and tries to pull away,
its legs give out, it falls, the knees fly up,
it turns blue, swells, salivates and bleeds.

Nothing has changed.
Except for the course of boundaries,
the line of forests, coasts, deserts and glaciers.
Amid these landscapes traipses the soul,
disappears, comes back, draws nearer, moves away,
alien to itself, elusive,
at times certain, at others uncertain of its own existence,
while the body is and is and is
and has no place of its own.



External, Internal Censorship (Zewnetrzna, Wewnetrzna)

External: In the comedy *The Old Husband*
replace the word "old" with the word "young"
and the word "yellow-belly" with the word "little bird"
because "yellow-belly" were what in the drawing rooms
of the Duchy of Warsaw
they called the soldiers of the Polish line infantry,
in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* cross out the expression
"walls have ears,"
prohibit the staging of *The Son of Judah* based on the novel
Eli Makower
because it resolves the question of Polish-Jewish relations
in the spirit of the greater solidarity of Jews and Poles,
which is harmful to the Russian cause
in our country;

Internal: pass over in silence;

external: throughout a century of activity
it accumulated a huge mass of records, circulars, confiscated
manuscripts and publications. It could be regarded
as the official history of literature;

internal: leaves nothing behind,

not even any traces of devastation

The preceding poems have been translated from the Polish by Magnus J. Krynski and Robert A. Maguire. Krynski has been a Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Duke since 1966, while Maguire is Professor of Slavic Literatures at Columbia University. Krynski and Maguire have worked as a team for the past ten years. Two of their volumes of translations were published by Princeton University Press, and a third by the Krakow publishers Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Stanislaw Baranczak is one of the leading critics and poets of the post-World War II generation. He is an editor of the literary quarterly *Zapis Record*, the most important of the Polish publications whose existence is not officially recognized and which therefore is not subject to censorship. In recent years, he has been in the thick of the struggle for greater political and literary freedom, and draws his themes from the political realities of Poland in the late 1970's.

Ryszard Krynicki, like his contemporary Baranczak, was an editor of the monthly journal *Nurt (The Current)* for several years during the 1960's. In more recent times, he has been active in the dissident movement, although nowhere nearly so visibly as Baranczak. Though heavily influenced by Baranczak, Krynicki does have a voice of his own, and certainly seems capable of continued development in the future.

Wisława Szymborska published her first poem in 1945, and has since come to be recognized as one of the great postwar poets in a literature that is especially noted for its excellence in poetry. Outside Poland, her poetry has been especially popular in Germany, where substantial translations have appeared in both the Federal Republic and the Democratic Republic. In English, Szymborska has been translated widely: forty poems appeared in *The Polish Review* (No. 3, 1979); and, in 1981, Princeton University Press published *Sounds, Feelings, Thoughts: Seventy Poems by Wisława Szymborska*.

Rousseau's "Les Joueurs, 1908"

They leap formally in the tight clearing
like well-trained pugilists,
their joints surprising as marionettes.
Poised in the stripes of bathers or convicts,
they rise taller than the low limbs of trees,
whose trunks open like the mouths of birds,
whose leaves are thick and dense as feathers.
Two men have turned the color of leaves,
yellow and red, they are becoming smaller.
Eyes fixed above the clipped black moustaches,
they cannot see their woodcut hands
turning to claws. Beneath them the ground
has been pecked clean of everything
but the shadows of men leaping.
In the sky, a giant beak moves
out of the tops of trees.
It is coming for the bright, red ball,
the blood-colored moon
which is its eye.



Newman Ivey White Award for Poetry

Reunion

So strangely untender this annual task:
Cleaning off the family graves was never my
Favorite pastime. My purest bent would leave them
Brambled, wild, a sere Sinai where any bush could burn
With my permission and blessing. But my movie-fed
Mind creates its own horror: What of tap-rooted
Saplings sprouting untended on tops of graves—
Stakes through decayed hearts? Starved cilia
Groping the flesh of my ancestors?

I de-bramble

Feverishly, chopping away briarberries
(Whose sugars stolen to produce this sweetness?)
With a hoe, snip the Spanish moss as dares
Drip too low from oaks too near. Mani-,
Pedicure each plot. I concede the markers
To the lichens; can even they
Be denied leave to embrace stone?

One such slab

Has toppled face down, tired or requiring, like
Antaeus, reunion with earth. I heft it upright,
Endure exodus of ants from the inscription's grooves.
Earth-purpled marble yields up its tome: *She was*
Too good and too gentle to live in this
Cold world.

Fanny, my grandfather's first
Poor wife. Her death was trite in that day,
Giving birth at nineteen to a first son

Whose minute-long life left him nameless. Buried
 With her here, nestled till rot between
 Her protecting breasts.

Time sank

*Into the stone, pulled there by a love
 Stronger than gravity, vanished between me and dark.
 Fingers, mine, traced the engraved words,
 Blessed braille. Arms—mine!—held tight
 The marker as in love: a different light bathed me,
 The almost-yellow light of dreams,
 And it was another century.
 A young woman stood beside me, her dress probably white
 But appearing gray, her hair not braided
 Or bundled but somehow flowing back from her face,
 Flowing the same way her dress flowed,
 Her face smooth as the surface of the nearby pond
 But bearing remnants of some recent wash of pain;
 I wanted to take her in my arms,
 Guide her to a seat on one of the stones,
 But she put out her hand to me and said
 "I'm fine now." I saw she carried
 A bundle in her arms, wrapped in linen,
 And I thought she'd come for a picnic,
 But then I saw it was a child, and she smiled
 And said, "Yes, we'll all be fine now."*

A frog

Splashes suddenly in the pond, startling me.
 Swallows dart by above, comprising,
 Along with the Evening Star, my witness.
 A child without a name! First name absent
 Only: we share surnames.

Did he look

Like me—hair red, eyes green? Would I
 Have loved him?

The hoe lies beside my hand,
Still—as if it had always been there.
Moonlight shows the cemetery clean and restful.
I stand, replace the marker, satisfy myself
That it will stay there, in peace, at least
Another year.



certain nuts, certainly bolts

to emily

inmoderate RED/BLUE 5-speed lawnchairs
woolf down jokes,
WAITING FOR BABY WASHINGTON TO TAKE ME
by the hand again
understanding
all the chrome & steel chat faces & of
course that have been
glory two-step to me
these past few fine days
& all that passes & surpasses
my cherub roving gambol
in holy glory providence
& mr. new york city baby too much for me
fresh & blind & ready
& shady,

handsome baby, i whisper the cadillac of
swines, the secret of your sixteen year old secret to me:

the gentle rove, the mercury dime, the hot dog stand,

the ravaged cola! the one & only love!
the all-day saturday alabaster watusi!

beware the scanty clad lemon-lyme teen, my prison
walking in the sexy door

for only below does it woe to fly above, rapture

of argyle winter & bequeathed juicy center, pumping
pure smooth oo-oo-joy

forever exposé, laughing on the grand & drunken white rocks

—cat o' nine sorcery made perfect
on those berserk ideas



Herman Salinger

Long Distance

You speak to me as through a veil.
You could be dead. As a matter of fact
when you are dead you will talk like that;
you will come back, more alive than now.
I barely remember your smell between the sheets.
You are a motherstone face-down on the ground
barely carved with my fingernails and teeth.
Our dead are buried lightly underneath.
We live above them, pouring libations:
our blood, our urine, our spittle, our tears.
Yesterday I watered my great-grandmother's hair.
They rise at night; they protect the children—
who smile, at dying, their feline, canine smiles,
not having yet held the obol on their tongues
tasting only each other's lips and genitals.
It is a long distance through the stones and gravel:
five feet down beyond the smelling point.
They feel the beat of feet, the pat of palms,
the padding of the beasts, the tickling toes
of beetles, the fearful impact of the cricket,
loud as a drum. They forget to forget.

Between the love-seat and the coffee table
their boots lie empty and invisible.
Our other selves are walking, standing there.
You sit beneath your portrait and you smile.
Not smiling back, its frame is out of joint.
Mine in the next room rubs against the wall
its blinded back and blinks with flexing jaw
its stiffened lip and medicated jowls.
My adolescent pubescent grandmother

adjacent hides her less than mona lisa smile,
wonders at fifteen years her village wonder,
half guessing the world's strangeness, stress and bloom.
The future, in the seashell of her ear,
hides shadows of her death, my mother's, mine;
her voice, slow-trickling underneath the glass,
mouths prophecies that long since came to pass.

Nancy Hanway

For Your Convenience

Dancing chorus girls in plumes with whom
there's nowhere you can't go—on a bus.
Your driver: **safe *reliable *courteous*
(leering) while girls giggle—a coach
who doesn't need a can opener and was raped.
Mismatched, screaming babies clutch rabbit coats.
Always the same child, or a retaped
edition of Mother Goose.
“My heart goes out to you.”
oh bus V932! You feel like home.

Unforgivable Vice

m thought she was sleeping too much,
so she locked her bed in the attic
along with many universal truths.
What a disgrace! Man's search for
meaning tossed in among the goose
down.



P. de Haenen
79

The Eye-Blink

I

(Darkness on stage. On the left we hear a peaceful breathing of THE MAN, asleep. On the right—the sound of THE WOMAN's steps, dragging a chain at her feet.)

THE MAN sighs loudly: at the same moment, a strong light falls on THE WOMAN's side. We see an attractive young woman, walking nervously to and fro in the room. Her right foot is attached to a heavy chain, which is attached to the rear wall. Her room fills only a third of the stage: simply furnished: a narrow bed covered with a pink sheet, a table, a chair. On the rear wall hangs a picture of a young couple dressed in wedding clothes. Scattered about the floor are a boy's old toys.

Separating the two rooms is a doorframe, one which is built in an ornate manner, as if it were the frame of a rococo-style mirror. THE MAN's room is still dark.

THE MAN sighs: lights on THE WOMAN.)

THE WOMAN (Blinking her eyes because of the sudden light.)

Are you sleeping?

(She steps toward the frame. As she does, the chain is stretched to its maximum. She stops, looks at the darkened room.)

Of course.

(She is in a rage. Runs to the rear wall and tries to free the chain from its base.)

I must get out!

(Her words wake him. Light on his room. A large room. Quite identical to hers: a bed covered with a blue sheet, a table, a chair. Absent are the picture and the boy's toys. At the rear wall: a real exit door, closed.)

He wakes up, stretches his muscles, smiles. He is attractive.)

THE MAN

Monika?

(She stops dead, sits in the floor.)

THE WOMAN

I'm here.

THE MAN

What are you doing?

THE WOMAN

Rise and shine!

THE MAN *(Smiles.)*

Shining already. How do you feel today?

THE WOMAN

How do you want me to feel?

THE MAN

No work today. Holiday.

THE WOMAN

Fine. What are you going to do?

THE MAN

I'll stay home. And take care of the collection.

(He gets up, dressed in pajamas. He will do calisthenics during the next conversation. She, sitting on the floor all the time, takes a small saw from among the toys and will saw at the chain. During her conversation she will try not to let him hear what she is doing. He never looks at her.)

THE WOMAN

I see you are in a very good mood today.

THE MAN

You're clever.

THE WOMAN

Something happened yesterday?

THE MAN

Ready to listen?

THE WOMAN

There are things you shouldn't hide . . . even from your wife . . .

THE MAN

Yesterday I met someone. We became friends and—

THE WOMAN

—and you brought her here.

THE MAN *(Stops his exercises.)*

I was certain you didn't hear us.

THE WOMAN

Our home has thin walls. You always forget that, as usual.

THE MAN

But you were asleep.

THE WOMAN

I pretended. As usual.

THE MAN *(Goes on with the exercises.)*

Anyway, you didn't disturb us.

THE WOMAN

No. I enjoyed looking at you. You are a perfect lover.

THE MAN

You flatter me.

(He bows in her direction, never looking at her.)

THE WOMAN

Is that why you look so happy?

THE MAN

Isn't that enough?

(He steps now to the doorframe, looks at it as if at a mirror: combs his hair, starts dressing.)

THE WOMAN *(Busy all the time sawing the chain.)*

You'll be sorry.

THE MAN

No way.

THE WOMAN

Because I'm chained to the damned basement? I won't be here forever. And then, it'll be my turn.

THE MAN

Are you trying to threaten me, you little whore? If I hadn't chained you here, you'd bring in every male in town.

THE WOMAN

Are you so different from me?

THE MAN

I didn't start it. I'm your faithful pupil. When we got married—

THE WOMAN

—married? (*She laughs.*) You really believe we are married?

THE MAN

—then my thoughts were different!

(*She gets up, takes the picture off the wall.*)

THE WOMAN

You kill me! We—married!

THE MAN

You're crazy!

THE WOMAN

Me?

THE MAN

How could you forget?

THE WOMAN

One can forget only a real past . . .

(She throws the picture toward the pile of toys.)

THE MAN *(Stepping toward the frame.)*

Don't throw our picture!

THE WOMAN

Come and get it!

(He stops near the frame, but does not enter her room. For the first time he looks at her.)

Thank you.

THE MAN

For what?

THE WOMAN

For looking at me. Why are you so angry?

THE MAN

I'm not coming in . . .

THE WOMAN

. . . only because I made a date with a nice man?

THE MAN

"... today at four p.m. at my place ..." I heard you.

THE WOMAN

You're wrong. I told him: "Today and every day at four!"

THE MAN

Why must you tell me all the details?

THE WOMAN

Because I live with them all the time! They are the only things I have, don't you understand?

THE MAN

I should kill you!

THE WOMAN

Why don't you come in and hit me? Kill me?

THE MAN

No.

THE WOMAN

The chain will not hold me here forever. Look! I'm sawing it with this rusty little saw ...

(Pause.)

THE MAN *(Startled, at the threshold all the time.)*

How did you get it?

THE WOMAN

Don't worry. No one comes to visit me without your permission.

(She points to the pile of toys.)

When you were a boy, you loved to saw . . . remember? So your daddy bought you work-tools. He loved you so much . . . I found it among your toys in this basement. Come in . . . try to take it away from me!

(Pause.)

THE MAN

You can't get out . . .

THE WOMAN

I have the whole day . . . till four . . . Come in . . .

THE MAN

No. I know you. I'll never enter this basement again. I remembered what happened then . . .

THE WOMAN

What happened then? Tell me again . . .

(He returns to the center of his room, sits down at the table. Her eyes follow him at all times. He gets up, takes a case from under his bed. Opens it. Takes out a pair of gloves. He caresses them. He takes out, in succession, other women's souvenirs—rings, curls, intimate clothes. He spreads them all over the table and plays with them. His play is very erotic and fetishistic. He kisses them, caresses parts of his body with them. Suddenly he throws them all over the room. Covers his face; she becomes very active now. Takes from under her bed a record-player. She turns it on; a sentimental waltz by Chopin. Then, with decision, steps to the threshold, crosses it and enters his room.)

II

(At this moment, the lights in her room fade out, the chain at her feet is freed easily from its base at the rear wall. She approaches him.)

THE WOMAN

I came to you.

THE MAN

Go back.

(She embraces him.)

THE WOMAN

Why?

(She kisses him.)

You really want me to go back?

THE MAN

Please . . . I can go on without you . . .

(He frees himself.)

THE WOMAN

What have you without me? These souvenirs? What are they worth? Maybe they belong to a past that was not . . .? Only the present counts. And the present is me . . .

THE MAN

Please . . . go back . . .

THE WOMAN

But I am the one who can't live without you . . . I need you . . .

THE MAN

I know that. But I must keep you there . . .

THE WOMAN

Because you are afraid of freeing me?

THE MAN

Yes . . . no! Because you don't exist!

THE WOMAN (*Approaches him.*)

I don't exist.

(*He lifts up a woman's hat.*)

THE MAN

Yes, and this is proof. Every new souvenir takes me further away from you!

THE WOMAN

And what do you do between one souvenir and the next? You think about your boring job? Or about those lonely dinners at cheap restaurants?

THE MAN

GO BACK!

(*Pause. She does not move.*)

THE WOMAN

I won't, because you don't intend to send me back. I know . . .

(He runs to the exit-door. She holds him back by force.)

Today is a holiday. The cafes and bars are closed . . . Pretty women don't walk alone in the streets . . . You'll feel like a bitch in heat . . . searching . . . Stay here. I'll cook you a nice dinner. We'll have a good time. Like it used to be . . .

(He frees himself. He is about to open the door. Pause. He turns to her.)

Do you remember our good times? Only us . . . you used to tell me all about your past . . . the real one . . . as if you were telling yourself . . . How good it was . . .

(She looks around.)

I remember there was a bottle of brandy here. Did you drink all of it alone?

(She searches, finds it under the bed.)

You naughty boy . . . always hiding everything under the bed . . . Drink. It will put you in the mood . . .

(He drinks.)

More? Drink more. It'll warm your blood, my man . . .

(He drinks more.)

More? Yes. Now we can talk . . .

(Chopin grows louder suddenly.)

What am I hearing? Old sentimental Chopin . . . You loved him so much, remember?

(They listen to the waltz.)

Come to my room, my man . . . come . . . there everything is nicer . . .

(She embraces him.)

My room is full of things you always loved . . . old souvenirs . . . real ones . . . come . . . Nobody will see you . . . Only me . . .

(They cross the threshold slowly.)

III

(At this moment the light in his room fades out. In her room, a warm pink light.)

THE WOMAN

It's really more pleasant here, isn't it? You loved this room once, remember? It reminds you of the basement in your home . . . where all the old things were thrown . . . How you loved to hide there . . . You told me, remember?

(They stop in front of the toys. She picks up a toy train.)

Your daddy brought you that once, remember? You thought you'd be able to get into the train one day and go away . . .

(She winds the train.)

Look! It still goes! Do you want to get in?

THE MAN

But I broke it! When I was a little boy!

(She puts the train on its tracks.)

THE WOMAN

I fixed it. For you . . .

(He sits on the floor and looks joyfully at the train going around him. She winds other toys and puts them on the floor. They all move around him. He looks at them as if hypnotized.)

And this car? You bought with money you stole from daddy, when he was asleep. You loved him so much . . . and this! And this! All of them are working—I fixed them for you . . .

(She puts on his lap a big old eyeless bear. For a long time he busies himself with the moving toys around him: he fixes one, winds another.

She walks slowly to a corner, picks up an old doll that was buried deep in the pile of toys.)

Nice to play with old real toys, isn't it? I fixed all of them, day after day. For you. In the endless time I had to be here. Alone. Chained like a bitch. And as a prize, I want only this doll . . .

(He looks at her, suddenly.)

THE MAN

What doll?

THE WOMAN

Have you forgotten her? You called her by my name: Monika! It's impossible that you've forgotten your daddy found you playing with Monika . . . dressing her . . . feeding her . . .

THE MAN *(Gets up.)*

You're lying! I never played with dolls!

THE WOMAN

If you wish, it was me who played with her . . .

THE MAN

This doll had never existed! Give it to me! I'll burn it!

THE WOMAN

If it never existed, how can you burn it?

(He steps to the threshold, in his hands the bear.)

THE MAN

Why did I come in? I must—

THE WOMAN

STOP! HERE I GIVE THE ORDERS!

(He stops tries to move his feet but they are paralyzed.)

THE MAN

What happened?

(She approaches him.)

THE WOMAN

There you are the boss . . . But here, this is my kingdom! Here you'll do what I say. And I order you to stay! I'll get out! It's almost four o'clock. Soon he'll knock on the door and I'll let him in, your feet will be chained as mine were. And you'll play with your toys. And when you get tired, you may measure this basement's length and width. Step by step. I know its length and breadth, but I'm not going to tell you. I don't want you to get too bored here . . .

(He is petrified. Tries to move his feet, in vain. They look at each other for a long time. In her hands is the doll. In his: the bear. He presses the bear's belly. Out comes a sound of deep wailing. Like a young boy's. He starts telling a story to the bear. In some miraculous way, as long as he goes on talking, his feet are able to move, very slowly, toward the threshold.)

THE MAN

Once upon a time Teddy Bear got lost. In the forest. He wanted to come back

home. Daddy was waiting for him. He was tired and scared. But he heard Daddy's voice and knew that—

(During his story her feet become paralyzed. She seems to understand why he is able to move: she starts also to tell a story to her doll—and by this means, she steps slowly toward the threshold.)

THE WOMAN *(Walks as she speaks.)*

—the night came quickly. And Teddy Bear fell down!

THE MAN *(Walks as he speaks.)*

—but he got up quickly!

THE WOMAN

—he didn't hear Daddy's voice anymore!

THE MAN

—but Daddy taught him to be a brave boy!

THE WOMAN

—Teddy Bear sat down scared, and wept because he remembered that there are wild animals in the forest!

THE MAN

—no! Teddy Bear got up and started running until he saw lights!

THE WOMAN

—but suddenly he heard an animal howling! Close to him! Wolves!

THE MAN

—Teddy Bear had to hide! Behind a tree! And the wolf passed by!

THE WOMAN

—but he forget that a wolf doesn't hunt alone! The others smell him out!

THE MAN

—no! He managed to fool them! And he ran! Ran!

(He is no closer to the threshold than her.)

And Teddy Bear saw Daddy! Daddy was looking for him!

(He is about to cross the threshold when she shouts.)

THE WOMAN

DADDY'S DEAD! HE SHOT HIMSELF WITH A GUN! BECAUSE TEDDY BEAR GOT LOST!

(He stops, faces her.)

THE MAN

It wasn't because of me! It's not true!

(He intends to hit her. She uses the opportunity to cross the threshold: she won.)

IV

(She enters his room, a strong light. In her room, where he has remained: darkness. He tries to cross the threshold after her, in vain: as if a real glass separates the two rooms.)

THE WOMAN

I'M FREE!

(She frees herself easily of the chains at her foot, throws them toward the darkened room.)

Four o'clock! He is coming! Do you hear me? He'll help me to forget you. And the

life in the basement. Where you belong! Now only I exist!

(She arranges her clothes and hairdo in front of the frame-mirror. She does not pay attention now to what is happening in the darkened room. From there we hear his footsteps. He lights matches.)

THE MAN *(To himself.)*

I must find it!

(He searches for something among the toys.)

Where did I put it?

(She straightens up the room. Some time passes.)

THE WOMAN *(To herself.)*

And what if he doesn't come?

(She turns to the exit-door. He feels this, runs to the threshold and whispers.)

THE MAN

Today is a holiday. There's no one on the street . . . You won't get a man there . . . I know . . . Wait . . . He'll come! He comes every day at four o'clock . . . knocks on the door . . . I never open it . . . But you . . .

(She returns, waits. He goes back to his search. Suddenly there is a knock on the door.)

THE WOMAN

He's come!

(At the same moment he finds what he has been looking for: a gun. He runs to the threshold as she gets up and turns to the exit-door.)

Just a moment!

(In a feminine caprice she turns to the mirror and arranges her hairdo. He is in front of her but she

doesn't feel him. He points the gun at her and shoots. Once—twice. She feels nothing, unaware of his presence. She turns to the door.)

One moment please.

THE MAN *(To the bear.)*

I didn't succeed, Teddy Bear. But there's another way to stop her. Good landing in hell . . .

(He points the gun at himself, shoots. Falls. His hands pass beyond the threshold. She, close to the door, shrinks, wounded. She looks at him.)

THE WOMAN

Now I'll have my own life!

(The knockings go on.)

Just one moment, my love!

(She approaches the threshold with difficulty, and tries to pull his hands back to the darkness. She is already very weak.)

One moment more and I'll be free . . . free . . .

(But his hands cling to her with force.)

Leave me alone! I want to live! TO LIVE!

(His hands pull her slowly into the basement's darkness. She tries to free herself in vain. Before she disappears, in a choked voice:)

Just one moment . . . one moment . . .

V

(Darkness on stage. Only the knockings are heard. The door is opened. A strange man enters. He

turns on the lights: there is only one room. The frame and the basement have disappeared—HE IS LYING ON THE FLOOR DEAD.)

THE END

Kevin Nance

Stays Against Confusion: James Applewhite's *Following Gravity*

Following Gravity

University Press of Virginia, \$6.95

James Applewhite does two things in his second collection of poems, *Following Gravity*: he laments the erosion of the way of life in his native South, and he attempts to infuse a different and superior consciousness—consisting of elements of memory, legend and dreams, and free from the constraints of time—into his current reality. His book is a cry of pain at the mutability of life and, simultaneously, a formula for dealing with the pain; without that as their immediate purpose, Applewhite's poems identify and preserve the things of worth in life which resist change. In a recent interview, Applewhite called literature "a potential stay against cultural entropy," saying, "Ideally, when we read poems we ought to be reinforced in our hope that life is in fact livable." In *Following Gravity*, he repeatedly attempts this kind of reinforcement, and very often succeeds.

The title poem of the book—and its most ambitious—is the best example of Applewhite's ability to do several things: to redeem existence by rejecting the idea that "ordinary" life in the physical world must necessarily be mundane; to enhance the reader's perception of fact by endowing the images used in the poem with a sane, ordered but ethereal quality; literally to transform reality by combining it with a sense of myth, legend, and the relativity of time; and most importantly, to offer a replenishment, a quiet optimism at the conclusion of the poem which makes further life (and therefore, further *reason* for engaging in such things as writing poems) possible and potentially fruitful. The universe—and the human psyche, according to Applewhite—has the ability to perpetuate itself against "the apparent downhill slide of the basic physical laws," and the poem "Following Gravity" is a poetic restatement of that theory. The poem begins with an actual canoe trip down a river (it originally appeared in the *Carolina Quarterly* under the title "Following the River"). A female persona—a

"country cousin" who figures frequently in Applewhite's work and, apparently, in his psychology—enters the landscape (already taking on a mystical nature in the poet's imagination):

... Roman
features were lovely with her eyes:
collective ancestor, distant sister.

A child had fallen from a tree.
Her pupils enlarged with his pain.
I imagined the molds we spill from.

Visible reality has become unimportant. Memory, and its tangible effect on the narrator's immediate situation, shapes the experience. The speaker's mind "steps away from its ribs," fashioning a threshold of split rails through which he steps into a room housing his life. Objects on a mantel—a blue dish, a clay pot—trigger memories of cornhusks, of walking with his brother, of hunting ducks. The female entity guides him, a strong image from the poet's past serving to introduce new ones. "If these are the patterns for days, where I are others?" he asks her. She shows him symbols—a sphere of water, water spilled from a handpump—which are, respectively, his death and the life he must live within physicality, within his body. Her voice, mingled with the river and the willows, speaks to him:

*Without its ooze, golden-skinned summer
would be a single day and never end.*

*Legs and breasts you've touched, hands
quick as fish, live only
in this autumn stream.*

And wishing to keep her (the higher consciousness he has attained through the experience at the river) with him always, he responds:

I know,

*I said, paddling in the horsefly
heat. I don't accept your argument.
I want you, for myself, someday.*

With that admission, the speaker relinquishes—but only in part—this unique event he'd savored. He turns from his inner landscape, composed as it had been of a heightened awareness of his past and future life, to the here and now, the "real" world, but with a new and positive perception of it:

But corn still tasseled, and streams
breathed seasons from their hollows.
Even wind seemed following gravity.

Much—perhaps too much—has been made of Applewhite's debt to the Romantic poets (admittedly, his frequent use of blazing images of light do indicate the considerable influence of Wordsworth), but "Following Gravity" seems to employ ideas associated primarily with certain groups within twentieth century literature—particularly, perhaps strangely, the Surrealists. Andre Breton, the acknowledged leader of the Surrealist movement, and Paul Eluard, his contemporary, clearly stated that the purpose of their work was mainly to bring man closer to the world by broadening his perception of it into the realm of dreams, the unconscious, and the supernatural. In his book *Mid-Century French Poets* (New York: Grove Press, 1955), Wallace Fowlie describes Surrealism's purpose in a language which might have had "Following Gravity" in mind. Surrealist poetry, Fowlie writes, "is concerned with establishing the contact between a poet and his destiny (the physical objects and the supernatural forces which form his destiny)." Applewhite's poem suggests exactly a relationship, even interdependence, between the physical world of objects and the narrator's destiny.

This connection between objects—visible actualities—and the lives (or destinies, in Fowlie's language) of humans is a theme explored in several other poems in the book, notably "Elegy for a General Store" and "Some Words for Fall." The latter, more successful poem describes "people down home in Eastern N.C.," making clear the inseparability of humans from their worlds of fact.

The language they speak is things to eat.
Barbeque's smell shines blue in the wind.
Titles of Nehi Grape, Doctor Pepper, are nailed
Onto barns, into wood sides silvered and alive,
Like the color pork turns in heat over ashes.

They look at leaves like red enamel paint
 On soft drink signs by the side of the road
 That drunks in desperation have shot full of holes.
 No words they have are enough.
 Sky in rags between riverbank trees
 Pieces the torn banner of a heroic name.

The poem acknowledges the presence—and sometimes the grimness—of reality; and yet it redeems the fact by bonding it to humanity, and by suggesting the worth of objects (and of life, of humans) by right of their interdependent relationships to one another.

This redemption is made possible partly by Applewhite's style—usually simple and traditional, quietly confident (his poems have been called “moral” and “sacramental”). In his introduction to *Following Gravity*, Donald Justice writes, “Because [Applewhite's] subject is so often the humble and the ordinary the style may be allowed a degree of elevation, even a certain composed and formal character, suggesting mannerliness and a sense of occasion.” And, he continues, “Now and then a passage will come through with something of the effect of a photograph, a photograph that in the development stage has been perhaps a little treated in the dark room. Yet always the fact counts for as much as the art.” *Following Gravity* lacks the bombast and frenetic energy associated with certain Southern writers, notably James Dickey, but it possesses a tensile strength of its own, springing from long-considered subtlety and finely-wrought design.

*

The Call

Enormous nostalgia, call of unconsciousness,
 You remember a geography south of where
 The Mississippi flows. Clouds pile, generic
 But unique, individual as always. Honeysuckle
 Scent sheathes streams, along hollows
 Below waking. Mourning doves call,
 From a continent drowned with Atlantis.
 A child across the street is fretful from heat.
 I hear her paradise and the beginning of weeping.

Besides demonstrating well many of the elements of style discussed previously, "The Call" shows James Applewhite's power as an elegiac poet, particularly when his subject is his home, the American South. Asked to talk about his poem, Applewhite mentions the words "pastoral elegy," and proceeds to define the phrase in his own fashion: "There's a field, a meadow, with shepherds and sheep, and one of the shepherds playing a lovely tune on a pipe. The scene is that of the pastoral. Then one of the shepherds dies, or some other thing occurs to disrupt their peace. They mourn, but not by weeping. The shepherd with the pipe returns it to his mouth and plays the original tune, but the music is changed, subtly altered by his sorrow." "The Call" is a leading example of Applewhite's sorrow at the passing away of the South; he said in the interview, "A part of me still yearns and reaches out to that sort of unselfconscious, not self-lacerating other world which used to drive around in pickup trucks and drink whiskey at stop signs during tobacco housing season..." Many of his poems are attempts to return to a version of that mythic mentality. Probably the best poem in the book, "Tobacco Men" eulogizes and makes peace with the memories of farmer families of the poet's past.

It is I, who fled such fields, who must
 Reckon up losses: Walter fallen out from heat,
 Bud Powell nimble along rows as a scatback
 But too light by September, L. G. who hoisted up a tractor
 To prove he was better, while mud hid his feet—
 I've lost them in a shimmer that makes the rows move crooked.

. . .

I search for your faces in relation
 To a tobacco stalk I can see,
 One fountain of up-rounding leaf.
 It looms, expanding, like an oak.
 Your faces form fruit where branches are forking.
 Like the slow-motion explosion of a thunderhead,
 It is sucking the horizon to a bruise.

A cloud's high forehead wears ice.

Again, Applewhite combines fact with a sense of myth and an ability to perceive

with startling images which, while beautiful, retain their clarity.

In "Building in the Country," one of the book's oldest poems, the poet continues his efforts to recover the past, primarily by a recall which treats memories kindly.

These fields toward the river are outside time.
 The horse has been grazing forever.
 That black mass of pines
 Is such as must always exist. My straight
 Route to Carolina Builders leaves out of account
 Those leaves in peripheral vision, which hold
 Their benediction just beyond focus.
 I envy dead farmers their roofs, their rust:
 At home in the spaces . . .

. . .

Maybe our misery gives that finishing perspective,
 As when barns hold hills like a varnished canvas.
 Atmosphere gathers most deeply to the wells of these yards,
 Most breathlessly recedes
 Where a house-corner cuts it:
 Canopied by oaks, suspended on distance.

Even the unpleasant may be remembered with something like affection.

Applewhite calls forth his memories—his grandparents, his wife and sons, the landscape of his past centered around eastern North Carolina—and is able to preserve them by insulating them in a blanket of respect, love and a kind of reverence. One of the finest poems of the book is "From as Far Away as Dying," an elegy with the curiously uplifting effect felt in the best of Applewhite's work.

And now in the end I can see this community together,
 Under angles of poor wooden gables and porches,
 Accumulated in vision and fronting the west at evening,
 With figures fixed in humblest gesture, descending
 A warped step, arising from porch swing or rocker,
 Or stooping to spit tobacco, become an architectural face
 Above Salisbury's entrance, man and wife in cotton

Rosy with sun as if King at Wells with elbows
 Thrust from his throne, or stone-wimpled Lady mediievally
 Distant in that air I remember, like choirs of all souls:
 Beside posts, porch railings—voices, this saintly communion.

Applewhite shares with T. S. Eliot a need to order and make sense of the universe, a need to put things to rest in a specific place in his mind. But memory for Applewhite is not simply recall; Justice's comment about darkroom treatment of photographs is particularly apt. Experience is freshly imagined and recreated in the book, as in "Rooster's Station," in which the poet remembers black people visiting his father's Esso station in his youth:

... passed live through our light:
 Glad-colored as moths or long-feathered birds.
 Their shirts' blood-crimsons, gold or green blouses,
 Sang within my eye like birdcall.

The book also includes "The Mary Tapes," a long narrative poem written nearly a decade ago and once published in *The Archive*. The poem has been revised extensively since then—lines shortened, added, certain elements of "color" (meant to foster the "country" identity of the speaker) removed or urbanized. In some respects the poem is improved, but in others—the "watering down" of what was a truly interesting and unique persona—less engaging. The revision of "The Mary Tapes" is indicative, too, of a general movement in Applewhite's poetry away from what might be called provincial (present in some of the poems in *Statues of the Grass*, his first collection) toward a more cosmopolitan, sophisticated mode of presenting what Faulkner called "the old verities of the heart"—human hope, courage, nobility—which Applewhite finds primarily in his past.

Following Gravity is a fine book. Its publication by the University Press of Virginia is the result of having won the annual Associated Writing Programs award judged in 1979 by Donald Justice. The poems therein were originally published in some of the country's finest magazines (*Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, and others), and constitute an outstanding achievement by Duke's poet in residence. Reading it is an absorbing and renewing experience, and one which—Applewhite's most precious gift to the reader—is reasonably permanent, and therefore retrievable.

Notes On Contributors

John Bernstein is Duke's playwright-in-residence. His cycle of plays, *The Gallery*, premiered this spring with Duke Players.

Kate Bertrand is an Editorial Assistant in the Graduate School of Trinity College.

Chris Caryl is a lead tong hand from Midland, Texas.

Rikki Garni hasn't forgotten you.

Donna Gregory is a senior psychology and studio art major. She plans to continue studying art after graduating.

Bill Haneman is a junior mechanical EE and studio art major from Wilmington, N.C.

Nancy Hanway will raise nervous goats and hopes in E. Thetford, Vermont.

Raisin Horn works in the cataloging department in Perkins Library, and has an M.A. in creative writing from Hollins College.

Donna Jackson is a Trinity junior from Annapolis, Maryland, studying creative writing and public policy.

Magnus J. Krynski and **Robert Maguire** have been described by a critic as the most active team of translators of Polish literature in the English-speaking world.

Kevin Nance has new poems in *The Lyricist* and *Tobacco Road*. This spring he co-directed *The Gallery* by John Bernstein for Duke Players.

Deborah Pope teaches at Duke University. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry Review*, *Poem*, *Cornfield Review*, *Cutbank*, and other magazines.

Herman Salinger's translation of Peter Henisch's *Hamlet, Fables, and Other Poems* has been published by Charioteer Press, Washington, D.C. Dr. Salinger is Professor Emeritus of Germanic Languages and Comparative Literature.

Marion Salinger has published poems in *Fantasy* and *The New Mexico Quarterly*, and translations from the German with her husband in various anthologies. She is the coordinator of International Studies at Duke.

Haun Saussy is a resident of Caswell Place who hopes to make his home in the stars.

Mark Scott is a Senior Editor of *Jabberwocky* magazine.

Kim Still is a beginning poet who has not yet learned the fine art of revision.

Susan White is a senior studying chemistry and art history, with a strong interest in studio work. She plans to pursue art conservation.

One man says of another: "I educated him." It would be offensive and would suggest that the victim was only a puppy when first taken in hand. But it is a proud thing to say, "I taught him"—and a wise one not to specify what.

—Jacques Barzun



The Text Bookstore is located in the basement of the West Campus Union. There you will find required texts and supplementary course materials needed for courses at Duke.

The Medical Center Bookstore is located in the Seeley G. Mudd Building. A store to meet the needs of the professional student and the Medical Center Community, with a selection of textbooks, supplies and equipment all related to the study of medicine.

The University Store, known as the "Dope Shop" is found in the basement of the Union Building on West Campus. A place to find a wide range of items from greeting cards to tennis shoes, and pens, notebooks and milk shakes.

The Gothic Bookshop is located next to Page Auditorium. For books not directly related to courses. A high quality shop for browsing, with titles ranging from current fiction and nonfiction to back stock of paperbacks in all fields of interest.



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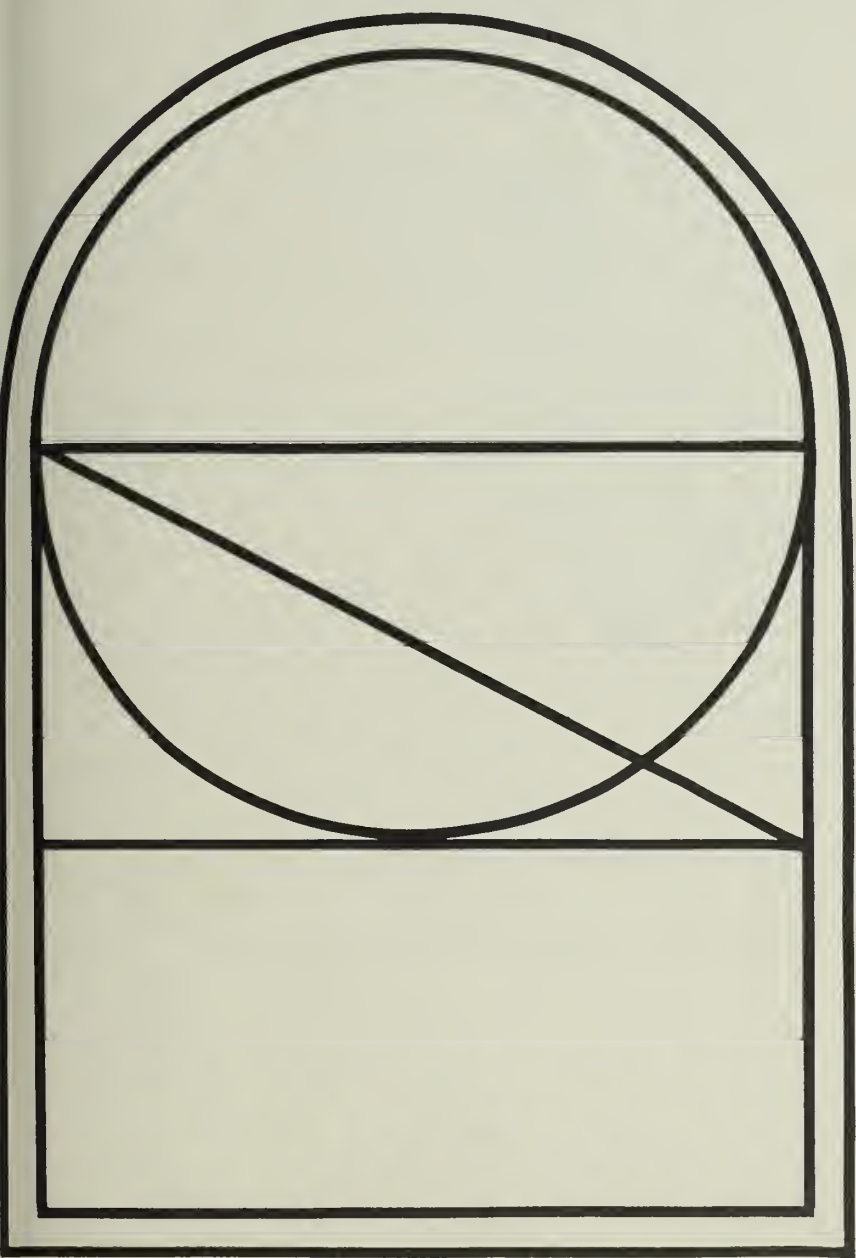
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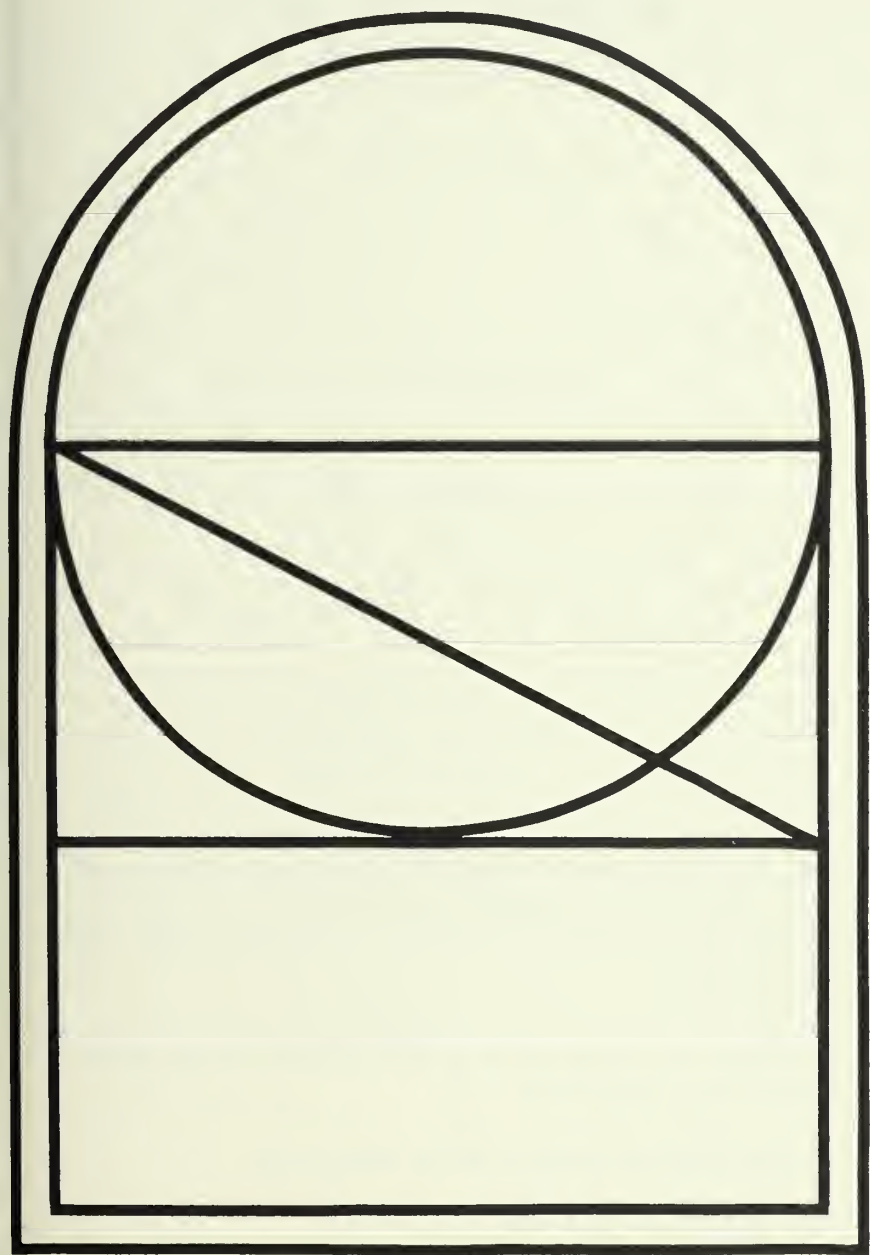
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THE ARCHIVE



AUTUMN 1981

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The Archive

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Announcements

The Archive announces that, for the second year, the Newman Ivey White Award for Literature will be presented to the Duke undergraduates with the best samples of poetry and fiction in *The Archive*. The judges are selected from the University community by the Gothic Bookshop. The names of the judges may not be made public.

The prize consists of a \$50 gift certificate to be used at any of the Duke University Stores.

Newman Ivey White graduated from Trinity College in 1919 and taught at Duke University from 1931 to 1938. He edited with W. C. Jackson *An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes* (1924) and *American Negro Folk Songs* (1928). In 1943, he became general editor of the Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore.

White was a noted scholar on Shelley and published many works, among them an anthology, *The Best of Shelley* (1932), *The Unextinguished Hearth: Shelley and His Contemporary Critics* (1938), a two-volume biography, *Shelley* (1940), and *Portrait of Shelley* (1945).

The Archive wishes to thank the Bassett Committee and the University Publications Board for their kind financial support of The Archive Fall Writers Series, which was held in October. The series featured readings and seminars by three writers now working in North Carolina: Betty Adcock, Gerald Barrax, and Lee Smith.

This issue of *The Archive* is the first which incorporates additional funds from the University Publications Board for the printing of photographs. *The Archive* hopes to provide a forum for the Duke community of photographers, and invites all those interested to submit work for each upcoming issue.

The 1982 William Blackburn Literary Festival, to be held in late March and early April, will feature readings and public seminars by Louise Glück (March 22), Galway Kinnell (March 29), Toni Morrison (April 7), James Applewhite and Reynolds Price (times to be announced).

Glück is the author of three collections of poems, including *The House on Marshland* and *Descending Figure*. She is currently an instructor in the Warren Wilson MFA Program.

Kinnell, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *The Book of Nightmares*, is the author

of several volumes of poetry, most recently *Mortal Acts Mortal Words*.

Morrison is the author of *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon* (winner of the National Book Award) and *Tar Baby* (currently a bestseller). She is an editor at Random House.

Applewhite, Duke's poet-in-residence, is the author of *Statues in the Grass* and *Following Gravity* (which won the Virginia Commonwealth University Contemporary Poetry Series competition in 1979).

Price is the author of ten books, including *A Long and Happy Life*, *A Generous Man*, *Permanent Errors*, *The Surface of Earth*, and (most recently) *The Source of Light*. He is Duke's writer-in-residence.

Falling Stars

Hardly knowing where I was
when October's clarity threw
my gait out of clumsiness,
out of the hot kitchen's window, and the
machinery of walking
and street-crossing was swallowed
by a drowsier flow,

I saw, yes,
the twin stars zip to sororal death.
They flew together, friendly,
co-spirited—
flame and *white ash*—
infinitesimally young in the old
night-woolen that pulled them,
from splinter of light,
arced slip of light, into
ream upon ream of slumber.

The only ravel I have caught is the glimpse
of a dot of light
flung at the infinite thirst,
of the drop suddenly nipped dry.
The cloth
loosens in this moment: the
half-sleep
parting like bedsheets—*a gasp*,
a free-fall—
then quivering, closing again.

One Night in a Taxi

Modern Athens at night slides
in streams alongside this ox-cart,
quite a swift carriage
through the yarn of small lights

to transport me in a current of air.
Speaking is perversely slowed.
Words grow languid,
resonant,

and neighborhoods unfold,
curl back and pass before
a word could ebb
to find its ending.

The taxi dips you as if
you were home, beneath the
tree seánce
where windows flame in air,

skims you, flies you in the dark.
But my heart is stubborn,
beating scarcely at this corner . . .
or this,

like a grapple
dragging under water to recover
the stillness,
the continuum inward, pure.

But my voice
is slow, is a thickness in the breath

and the struggle to go backward before
the start. I am slowed

even as we speed downhill.
I am near stopping—even
as we bound ahead
and noise runs in a torrent.

Harvest of Ghosts

You let go of evil, you let go.
Taste its melting like chocolate
in the glass,
it passes from the top.
Hands pressed on either side, it

pours, the fat rises;
hardness of the skull can bear its exit—
slow, pathetic—
and then risen like cream.

Where can it rest?
Not against our efforts,
no longer, for there is no contention
or reluctance.

When calm and willing
you let go of evil, curl and husk

hold pure air, cold air, a pure
slight smile of air that opens
and the dust and strings and sweetness
bow back, they know their end, they

drop in the furrows,
they fall in the wheelbarrows on the field.
Opens, for there is neither storm
nor weight nor apparition.

From *Slowly Toward Sleep*

"Where is she, damn it? She should be here by now."

Jon glanced at his watch. It was true: his mother had said she'd meet them at the station, but they'd arrived ten minutes ago and there was still no sign of her. He watched Brice out of the corner of his eye, seeing how his roommate shifted his weight from the right leg to the left, then from left to right, every twenty seconds or so. Brice was sweating. And he had said almost nothing, Jon had noticed, since they'd left the city.

"Damn it," Jon said again.

Brice was silent. He'd lived with Jon the entire summer in a studio (one room) apartment, and they'd talked about nearly everything—how frightful Angela Lansbury looked in *Sweeney Todd*, the price of Seventh Avenue's "Famous" Deli Burger, how the Mets looked to make a comeback. Everything, it seemed, but Jon's mother. Mrs. Kramer was "energetic," "vital," "a real dynamo" (Jon used these words, Brice had felt, with a certain nervous pride)—the image of the aging but nicely acclimated suburban widow. She played tennis with a woman from next door named Poochie, and ventured twice a week into town to take a course in Contemporary Social Issues at CCNY.

But Jon had avoided or ignored all of Brice's attempts to find out what she was "really" like. ("Jon," he'd said early in the summer, "have your mother come by after class some day, we'll have lunch at the Chariot." "Sure," he'd said, but the lunch never materialized. "Jonnie," he'd said a few weeks ago, "how's Mommie?" "Quit kidding around," Jon had said quietly.)

Jon made an impatient snorting sound. "Christ. Maybe she forgot. Let's find a phone."

It took a while. The train station wasn't in the best of conditions, and the booth was lodged between two large soda machines. Jon dialed and stared at the receiver.

Brice felt as if he might shiver. It was hard to understand why; the afternoon sun was creeping beneath the shelter toward them, and even in the shade it was quite warm. He was becoming aware that he was sweating.

The platform was quiet. Two old men were lounging on a bench near them, giving the boys occasional glances. Brice felt in his pocket for change to give them if they asked. They were beginning to look as if they might.

"Jon," he said quietly, "How many times did you visit home this summer?"

"Oh, a few," Jon said, still staring at the receiver. "Once or twice."

The old men got up and started shuffling toward them, pretending to read playbills posted on the walls as they moved.

Brice realized suddenly that Jon had been staring at the receiver for a long time. "No one home?"

Jon shook his head very slightly.

"Maybe she's on her way," Brice offered.

"Yeah," Jon said. He found himself smiling. "Yeah." Things were suddenly better. He faked a punch to Brice's jaw, laughing. "Maybe. Grab me a Coke, okay?"

Brice smiled too. He shoved coins into the machine. Turning around to hand Jon a can of soda he saw his roommate facing the old men, who were now standing five feet away, staring at them. He watched as Jon pulled two quarters from his pocket and flipped them both into the air. The old men caught them. "My treat," Jon told them.

Brice watched the men shamle off down the platform. Behind him Jon was on the phone again, this time calling a taxi.

No one was at home of course. Jon jimmied a window and climbed in, letting Brice in through the back. They walked through the den: chrome furniture with white leather upholstery; white carpet; enlarged and framed black-and-white photographs on the walls; metal sculpture on the tables; a coffee table made of a single block of glass; copies of *Art News*, arranged chronologically; a rubber plant by the entrance, the waxy leaves gleaming as if polished.

In the kitchen Jon sliced large pieces of warm banana nut bread for both of them and was pouring glasses of milk when they heard the back door softly open and close. Automatically they turned and faced the kitchen entrance.

Mrs. Kramer's tennis outfit was completely white. Her skin was cased in a film of sweat. She was about fifty.

No one said anything.

Brice looked at Jon, then back at Mrs. Kramer, and stepped backward involuntarily.

She was staring directly into his eyes.

Brice's eyes were beginning to hurt. He felt defenseless—was Jon still in the room?

It was ludicrous. The stare had been continuing for what seemed minutes. She was beautiful, in a hard sort of way. He wondered why he thought that. She didn't wear nail polish or jewelry, and her hair, though mannishly short, was lustrous and soft. It did not matter what color her eyes were. He could not tell, anyway. Her eyes were the color of desperation.

He shivered.

She is using my eyes as mirrors to watch herself.

He shivered again. He guessed it was something she did with everyone, even with

Jon. It didn't matter. Eyes were eyes. They reflect. He knew that most people in her stare would simply be put off or fascinated, perhaps thinking themselves flattered. Others, quick enough to recognize her purpose, might think her a narcissist—when in fact, he thought, she was actually intensely self-absorbed, perversely calm. It had nothing to do with vanity. Narcissists admire themselves; Mrs. Kramer merely watched.

What was she looking for?

There was a buzzing in the room. Brice was surprised to realize that he was sensing his own blood prickling to the surface of the skin beneath his eyes and cheekbones.

Jon broke the silence. "Mother."

Brice was suddenly aware that Mrs. Kramer was holding a tennis racquet. Obscurely this increased his nervousness; he realized that it seemed a part of her arm, perhaps because she held it by its very end, the leather-bound grip disappearing into her palm. She moved to a small closet beside the refrigerator, and again Brice was surprised: she seemed to glide on the tiles, her head maintaining the same height in the air. She opened the door delicately and slid the racquet into its place—soundlessly, lovingly, as if putting an infant to bed.

"Hello dear," she said.

"Where were you?" Jon sounded short, flat.

"When?" Brice thought she said it the way a secretary might ask her boss's client about an appointment.

"An hour ago, when we were waiting for you at the station." Jon was watching his mother's mouth, Brice noticed, not her eyes. Brice wondered suddenly if she ever wore glasses.

Mrs. Kramer picked up a spoon from the counter and began polishing it with a dishcloth. "Oh, I'm sorry about that, Jonathan. When you called yesterday and I said I'd meet you at the station, I'd forgotten I had tennis with Poochie this afternoon."

Jon watched her mouth. She rubbed the spoon. The silence in the room became oppressive; Brice wished the refrigerator would start up, or that a car would pass on the street, or that a fly would buzz. But the room was spotless. Flies were unthinkable.

Jon said quietly, "Why didn't you call back to let me know?"

Mrs. Kramer held the spoon up to the light and stared into its bowl. "I didn't have your phone number."

Jon looked away.

Brice thought *And the summer's almost over.*

Abruptly Mrs. Kramer threw the spoon into the sink. Brice winced, feeling the clang and clatter as a violation of something. Wheeling around, Mrs. Kramer said to Jon, "Aren't you going to introduce me to your friend?"

Dinner was tomatoes stuffed with bread crumbs. Mrs. Kramer talked about Contemporary Social Issues. Brice listened. Jon chewed morosely and stared at the clock.

"What time is your appointment, dear?" Mrs. Kramer asked Jon.

"Ten."

Brice looked at Jon. "Appointment? I didn't realize—"

"His teeth," Mrs. Kramer said. "Jonathan has awful teeth, horrid teeth. He's getting a couple of molars out tomorrow. The family doctor's doing the honors."

Jon stared at Brice. "He's the only dentist who's familiar with my case. Had to come out to Huntingdon to get them out."

"Oh," Brice said. "I thought—"

"Horrid teeth indeed," Mrs. Kramer said. "He's getting a couple of molars out tomorrow."

"Your mother's a nice-looking woman," Brice said that night. He noticed, lying in bed, that the curtain at the window between the beds was stirring. He tried hard to see the stars, any stars, or the moon, but the cloud cover was too dense.

"Yes, I suppose she is," Jon said.

"Do you think the two of you, ah, relate?"

"To what?"

Brice thought Jon's voice sounded far away, and he wondered if that was Jon's fault or his own. He wished he could see Jon's face, but the room was dark. "To each other, Dumbo."

"I suppose. Sure."

Brice said nothing.

"You don't think we do?"

"I don't know. What sort of things do you do together?"

"You mean like tennis?"

"If that's what—"

"We read together," Jon broke in.

"In libraries, you mean?"

"No, of course not, we read the paper together in the mornings. Over breakfast, say."

"Over breakfast," Brice repeated. He sensed the curtain; it was distracting him from the conversation, but he couldn't help it. *Jon is home to get some teeth pulled. Horrid teeth indeed. I didn't have your phone number. She is using my eyes as mirrors to watch herself.*

"—and tennis," Jon was saying. "There's always tennis."

"Tennis," Brice repeated.

"Just yesterday she was telling me how good I was. But she likes to flatter me. She's really very good, you know."

"At what?" Brice strained to see the curtain.

"Now who's Dumbo? At tennis! She's got a serve you wouldn't believe."

"Do you love her?" Brice was surprised at himself; he hadn't planned to ask that. It was perfectly dark, but he knew the curtain was fluttering.

"What?"

"Do you love her?"

"Of course I do."

"Why?"

Jon was silent. Brice heard Jon's bedsprings move; he knew that Jon was sitting up and facing him.

"Why are you asking me these things?" Jon's voice was frightening.

"Look," Brice said quickly, "I'm sorry. I didn't think you'd mind."

An entire minute passed.

Jon lay back down. "I don't, I don't. Forget it."

"Thanks, Jon. See you in the morning, okay?"

Jon made no sound. After a while Brice decided to believe that Jon had gone to sleep.

Directly above them Mrs. Kramer was preparing for bed. She sat before her dressing mirror, staring at her face. It was despicably round, she thought, like some overripe fruit. She traced with a finger the fine lines around her eyes, then the deeper ones in her forehead, and at last the furrows that ran down to the corners of her mouth. But the skin was tan from long hours with Poochie in the sun; she would look just fine, she thought, on any street in California.

She parted the front of her gown, exposing the whiteness of her chest. She stared at the flatness there, the caved-in, hollow center.

She was alone in the room. She herself was responsible for its contents, and only she. The dresser, the thing most familiar to her, was smooth, the edges worn down long ago by caresses. She ran her hands along it, touching the objects there: the hairbrush, the mirror itself, the endless row of medicine bottles. There were no cosmetics—she prided herself on that.

She stood. Placing her left hand on the crown of her head, she began brushing, with her ringless right hand, her beautiful flashing hair. Simply by moving her eyes, she could see herself from a dozen different angles in the surfaces of the mirrors which covered the walls and ceiling of the room.

There is nothing in this room I cannot hear, Brice thought. The house was quiet: Mrs. Kramer had gone to bed long ago. There were only the occasional flutterings of pigeons nesting in the eaves of the house, and a car now and then on the street.

But he could not hear Jon's thoughts, try as he might. Jon got up silently and went into the bathroom down the hall. *He is kneeling on the tiles beneath the sink, crying. He thinks no one can hear him with the door closed, so he cries. He is pouring himself through his eyes into the cracks between the tiles, thinking he will seep down through the fibrous timbers of the house into the gutter beside the street.*

will swim in the stream to the heart of the ocean, and spread his particles out over the face of the earth, each one so distant from the next that finally he will have lost himself and become nothing.

That was what Brice thought. Or dreamed, he couldn't tell which. Jon came back to the room and got in bed.

Several minutes passed.

Jon said, "Did you notice she wears a wig?"

After a while Brice said "No."

The clouds outside had parted, finally, and the moonlight streamed through the window, softly lighting the floor between the two beds. The curtain was still. Brice, still awake, was worried: he could see the shadowy outline of Jon lying beneath the bedclothes across the room, but he could see no movement, no suggestion of breathing. He imagined for a minute that Jon was dead, that he had been dead for hours, and that he, Brice, would soon die. But that sort of speculation, though tempting, made him nervous. He was here, now, with Jon and these possibilities lying in the next bed; he rose, cool in his underwear—Jon always wore pajamas—and stepped to the other's bedside. He bent to listen for breathing: five inches from Jon's face and still he could hear no sound, could only see in shadow the closed mouth and silent nose. He searched for movement in the eyelids—could Jon be dreaming?—but could detect no stir, and had finally decided to check for a pulse, his palm reaching to press Jon's chest, when the stark white-and-dark eyes flashed open, though dusk had been long before.

Brice stepped back in shock. Jon's mouth opened for the first time in hours: "She is my mother. *That* is why I love her."

The three of them stood on the platform at the train station, waiting.

"How does it feel?" Mrs. Kramer asked.

"Not bad," Jon said, rubbing his jaw.

Mrs. Kramer turned to Brice. "It was nice meeting you, young man. You will come to visit again, won't you?"

"Of course," Brice whispered.

The doors of the train opened. "Let's go," Jon said to Brice.

Brice was moving when Mrs. Kramer touched Jon's arm.

"Give me a call soon," she said.

Jon stared above her head and nodded.

"Call me," she said. "Call me."

The doors closed behind them. They found a seat just as the train began to move, on its way to the city.

Mt. Rigi, Cattle in Fog

After the steep, costly ascent,
Tremendous disappointment: thick fog
Domed like a sedative against blue lakes
Mirroring yellow meadows.

We walked anyway,
Along trails precarious with dew,
To a clearing among the spiked, glittering plants
Whose names we never learned. Mouthing chocolates,
We heard thunder rising in the mountains.

From beneath the dome, bellied low and full of rain,
Came a dark, cautious chiming,
The bells of nearby cattle.

The fog parted.
We glimpsed the implacable herd,
Thick necks muscled like ancient trees,
Lines of backs a sloping riverbed,
Innocent, inevitable,
Chiming a descending promise.

Learning to Hear

These sounds have taught you sleep:
a passing automobile,
the slender dark shifts of your housemate's torso,
pines moaning into their pillows of green ice.

The phone might ring with someone hurt, a friend;
you would never know. The fever
fills your ears with wine;
suspicions ferment in mute, cool cellars of dream.
A lead casket plunges through milky salt curdles
soft and white as the sheets you smother in.
Waking will be a difficult navigation.

Arriving in an unfamiliar body,
plumpness blundering against blue dissonances,
you long for the supple, attentive grace
of young mothers walking ruby avenues
where leaves stray and gather.
Each hand bears a poultice for the sleepless,
a pink, sinuous conch that cradles the sea, its child.

Taking Jenny Home

It took me a long time to decide
To go back. I guess the not knowing
What would happen scared me the most.
But I've always been sort of gutsy
That way—like taking a deep breath and
Plunging into a cold stream all at once.
So I decided. I called the bus station and
Found out when the next Greyhound left for
Memphis, then I got some things together,
Took the baby and just went.
Jimmy was away on a 60-day cruise,
So it was O.K. for us to leave.
We'd be back long before he hit port.

I think the baby was what finally
Made me decide. I'd rock her to
Sleep at night and sing to her—
Brahms' Lullaby—and sometimes my voice
Sounded just like one I could barely remember,
Low and husky and real soft,
A voice that means *mother* deep down.
I'd put Jenny down, and say her name,
And I'd hear my father calling "Jenny!"
Like when the phone had rung and *she*
Was upstairs, or else slow and quiet
With a sort of a question, like when
He told her he loved her. Before the baby
Was born, Jimmy tried out that name—
Tasting it on his tongue, like some
New recipe I'd made. Maybe the way
Men say that name—Daddy calling, then
Jimmy saying it over and over—I wanted
To name my little girl that. Jenny.

It was raining that day. One of those
Real hard downpours that you get in May.
Just as the cab pulled into the road,
The rain nearly stopped, and the light through
The clouds got mixed up with the leaves
And everything had a yellow-green cast,
Like looking through sunglasses.
So I told the driver which one it was,
And he pulled through the mudholes
Until I could get out without stepping into water.
I put little Jenny under my slicker so the
Rain wouldn't drip onto her from the trees.
The sidewalk seemed real long,
But I made it to the steps, and I stood
Looking down at how the water had turned the
Bricks dark like blood.

Then all of a sudden the door opened.
I jerked my head up quick, and I was looking
Right into her eyes. Hazel, with flecks of gold.
I'd forgotten how green and brown could mix—
Like looking into trees from a second-story window
On a sunny day. I wanted to say something,
“Mother,” or just even “Hello,” but my throat
Had gone all tight and hot, and nothing
Would come out. She said it first, my name.
“Katie.” Just “Katie.” It sounded sort of shocked
And sad all at once, but still low and quiet
Like I'd remembered. The baby started crying
Right then, and Mother looked down surprised.
I said, “Mother, this is Jenny,” and I handed
The baby to her, my heart pounding hard and fast.
She looked at me, searching with her eyes and
For a long minute I thought she was going to
Go back in and shut the door.

But she took the baby, and pulled the
Blanket from her face. She said,
“Hush, Jenny. Shh, Jenny, baby, shh.”
And the way she said it, *Jenny*, it was
Almost like she was saying my name,
Like it was me she was rocking in her arms.

Building Up; Breaking Down

Their clutter has escaped—
From the attic, the closets, the garage,
The downstairs end tables.
It has come here to my room, to sleep,
An ambiguous, latent jumble.
I sit among it, try to ignore it,
Am somewhere between disgust and appreciation.
I have never liked empty space.

Long moments I sit thinking,
Not thinking. Sounds of rain
And my sister's guitar brush the silence,
Soft bits sift through the walls like
Pieces of lint that won't hold together.
Establishing territory here is futile.
Books and clothes are only temporary piles.
Yet with each leaving, less is left:
I will feel it next visit.
With time, home erodes like
Soap left in the rain.

Raisin Horn

A Tamarind Poem

For Barbara Kennedy

*Branches above my head
extend their dark blessing.*

—Gregory Orr

The night broods, impatient.
Light will rise
in silence like the baker
who leaves white footprints
on the pine staircase.

In the kitchen bread is carried,
prize from the ovens.
The friar, passing by, pauses
in the doorway to cross his arms,
and the warm loaves are blessed.

Flour on the breadboard
begins to form a mute bird.
Not far away can be heard
the solitary melody
of a piccolo.

*

In the drawing room a woman
spends all the morning
at the piano, filling
one blank page with black notes.
By afternoon the rain
asks only to be heard

above the long bowing
of violins.

*

Downstairs, the rooms empty
after supper at nine.
The lamps are put out
like candles one by one,
and through the dark,
the solemn heartbeats
of a Viennese clock send up
one clear pitch
to sing by before sleep.

The Time to Go Home

(an excerpt from A Hand in the Sky, a novel)

After Jack got out of the El Paso Natural Gas truck at the service station in Voyd he called his father on the pay phone there, then sat down to relax while he waited for his father to arrive. He sat down on an overturned bucket at the corner of the building and listened to the sluggish, pungent draws of the mechanics and the pump attendants, punctuated by the occasional bark of some distant dog or the sound of a screen door slamming. The only other sounds were those of the cars and trucks that came to the station while he was sitting there, or the cars and trucks that passed on the highway, heading toward Voyd itself. Voyd proper, as Jack had discovered, was another half-mile or so down the road, the service station and its ancillary café the only buildings visible on their side of the highway. On the other side, though, was a tract of small, regular houses that bordered the gas processing plant back up the road. The houses looked to Jack as if they might once have been part of an oil camp that Phillips, say, which owned the plant next door, might have built back in the twenties or thirties. Sitting on his bucket and looking across at the houses Jack could see only one person anywhere around them, a middle-aged man sitting in a chaise longue on his green lawn and reading a newspaper. Despite this general appearance of desertion most of the other houses Jack could see looked well kept, with square, neat lawns and a scattering of cottonwoods and locust trees. None of the cars Jack could see looked junked and the houses themselves, though differing individually in a few details, hanging plants or children's plastic toys on a stoop, for instance, were unanimously square and plain, all obviously from the same plan, with white asbestos shingling and white wooden trim, and roofs of a pale green asbestos shingle which had been weathered down to the texture of denim. The tract was enclosed by a high fence of wire netting with gates where it was broken by driveways, and the netting provided a trellis for grape and gourd vines that mottled it sporadically with leaves and bast-matted tendrils. The shade of the leaves was supplemented by that of the cottonwoods and the other trees, and the man turned the pages of his paper idly, and everything else across the road looked cool and spontaneous. His distance from the scene struck Jack as symptomatic. But he stayed where he was, on his bucket, and lowered his eyes to the scrawled, hardening mud between his feet, waiting for his father to get there.

As he sat there and looked down, holding his balled and dirty clothes in the hard hat in his lap, he began to watch the water in the ruts in the ground. The water was

still and muddy and in one place a small drop of oil had spread a skin of color across its surface. The oil, goaded by an imperceptible breeze, moved slightly as he watched, and he was reminded irresistibly of Webster's blood mixing with the water on the floor. The layer of water that covered the floor had flowed toward the drain holes much more quickly than the patch of red at its edge, and ripples spread by the wind evened out and became smoother as they passed through the more viscous blood. Jack had been surprised by the blood's brightness, and tried to remember, unsuccessfully, whether arterial or venal was the kind with more oxygen and thus the brighter, as he had been taught. In any case, when he had been watching the blood for a while a tentative dun-colored finger of drilling mud, originating from somewhere near the back of the floor, near the driller's station, began to slowly invade it. He had looked from the blood to where Webster was still sitting up against the chain guard and scowling into the emptiness over the doghouse. That was before they had put the coat over his body. Thinking about the coat Jack looked up from the water in the rut and back at the buildings of the camp. The man was still leafing through the paper.

Jack rose and put his hard hat under one arm and slung his bundle over the other shoulder. Then he crossed the highway to the edge of the oil camp. He walked along the edge of the highway for a hundred feet or so until he crossed a dirt road that entered the highway at right angles from the south. When he had crossed the dirt road he was standing in a square a hundred feet or so on a side of what had some years back been cleared ground but was now clogged with weeds and a few growths of young mesquite. When the ground had still been tame, Jack realized, a baseball field had been there. A basepath was faintly visible beneath his feet and behind home plate were the remains, uprights and sagging chicken wire, of a backstop. It was this backstop that he had seen from his bucket and that had incited his curiosity. The ground inside the diamond was not as thickly overgrown as the outfield, which was distinguishable from the prairie itself only by the low fence that separated them. The field's disuse suggested to him that it dated probably from the founding of the camp, either just before the Depression or during it, and he wondered whether it had been scraped out by the company or by the inhabitants of the camp in a spare moment for themselves or their children. Jack could not himself envision playing nine innings of anything on his one day off for every twelve or thirteen hours at twelve hours a day, or however the hell they had done then. After a moment he went out to the pitcher's mound, actually a scuffed, sere gouge in the earth like the ones on the diamonds of the playgrounds in Allenson, the playgrounds where he had first been informed of the complexities of sex and games and the hierarchies of sorrowfulness and admiration and the aimless bland movements of dust that kept him, screeching on the sidelines with his asthma, from running with the ball as much as he would have liked, and standing there he suddenly realized that he was through with this job, that he was finished with Peppercorn Drilling for whom he had worked for two and a half years, and that he had around thirty thousand dollars stored up in his bank account. He considered all of this, not without remembering in its now brutal familiarity the picture of

Webster at the chain guard and the muddy, ragged cavity of his side above the blood-washed floor, then with less clarity but comparable force that of George two years before as he clutched his crushed fingers, split from tip to base to show the bone, and the stories that he had heard in between: the Mexican with his head smashed between casing and tongs, Larry's father beneath the ton or two of drill pipe they had dropped on him, the endless litany of crushed fingers and line-burns and slashed arms and legs and suddenly, inspired by the earlier memory of playing games, he was thinking of New England, of Leavenbrook. He felt sweat spreading across his forehead, one drop swelling with sudden violent clarity at the tip of his nose, and felt the light on his face and arms, but he was thinking about the brilliant late fall afternoons in Massachusetts, without nostalgia but rather a more vague, urgent and almost irritating desire that he might have suppressed in a less vulnerable moment. But realizing his vulnerability to it he did not care, and he turned and looked back across the highway, at the service station and its café and beyond them to the bright gold of the alfalfa fields with the intense vacant blueness above them nearly incandescent in the heat and extending to the horizon where a dark, bloated stain of smoke was stiffening into the sky. "Probably someone burning off a sludge pit," he thought to himself as he looked at the smoke and then to the right of the smoke where he could just make out the silhouette of a drilling rig. By the time he looked at the drilling rig he was not thinking of New England anymore but of dry scrubby mountains in New Mexico overlooking basins full of desert and the dull deserted length of the Oklahoma turnpike the way it had looked the first time he drove up to New Haven and after that the fireworks stands in Missouri, and then the stench of tobacco in the air of the North Carolina industrial towns cramped with brick and heat and railroad tracks and the huge, brutally gray and defiant wilderness of the far bigger Yankee cities, for instance the high-walled polyglot and intractably bloody (even more than Houston!) New York, and realized thinking this that he was going to take a vacation, possibly prolonged, to refresh his recollections of the different kinds of anguish there were to imbibe. "Best of all," he thought, "when I am in the North or wherever and talking to my friends again, in a dorm room or apartment, we'll be talking like old peers and compatriots but I'll be thinking the whole time about my own understanding of the work I've done and rising blood and tripping out until you are dead at the end of your tour and the bit coming out of the ground mottled and thick with clay and of course the hollowed-out and mud-blooded body of Chris to whom the blow came with that incredibly sudden pain-swiping shock that left him empty before he could close his eyes, and I will feel something about it that I never got from television or the movies, the experience of dying for instance chased off the screen, out of the hospital and the morgue, into proximity with drinking and eating, where it belongs. And it's not something I'll be pleased about or proud of, but it will be there, guarding itself, and they might even look at it and wonder to themselves 'Did he ever manage to become one of those guys? Did he lose his own language and education and go off and be one of them and change?' And I'll be thinking that, for one thing, you don't ever change. You are changed." And when he said that to

himself a spasm of something went through him and he felt tired, about to cry as he usually did when he was that tired, and completely defeated by the idea of returning the hundred or so yards to the place where his dad would be coming to get him. But he started walking back without any conscious direction from his brain and when he got there he went inside and bought two Milky Way bars and a Coke because he suddenly felt enormously empty and as he ate, sitting on his bucket, he said to himself with utterly undramatic sincerity, "Just be thankful you've got a stomach, son."

He sat there another forty minutes and looked up only when someone pulled into the station. Whoever pulled into the station would usually, as they got out of their car, give him a half-curious glance, and if they were oilfield (many welders and a pumper or two came through while he was sitting there) they would take in his clothes and the hard hat in his lap with the bundle in it and the blue cap on his head and not give it a thought beyond "Fucking old roughneck or something, his car broke down or else run off by his pusher. Squirrely-looking motherfucker like that, I would've too," and go on inside to buy a Coke and pay for their gas. People who weren't oilfield would linger briefly over the sight of him in their minds for several minutes before their thoughts went on to other things miles of highway later.

In any case, Mr. Larkin finally did arrive and watched from the driver's seat as his son got in and closed the door. Jack seemed pale to him, and very tired.

"What the hell happened?" asked his father. "What are you doing out here?" He turned the car around in the direction of Allenson.

"I got run off," said his son. Jack glanced in the rearview mirror and saw the tableau of the station, oil camp and baseball field dwindle behind them.

"I know that," said Mr. Larkin. "What in the world for?"

Jack laughed. "I'm not really sure, to tell you the truth. I've told you that I haven't felt real comfortable around these guys lately and I think it had just gotten kind of tense, if you can understand me." He looked out his window at the shimmering gold of the alfalfa.

"That's it?" said his father softly, and frowned. "Surely there must have been something that made him let you go finally?"

"We also had an accident today," said Jack.

"Was it your fault?" asked his father.

Jack looked at his father, and suddenly remembered what they had asked him when he had come up on the floor: "What were you doing down there?" He began to wonder idly what he could have done at the pits to make the kelly hose leave its mooring. He had been nowhere near the pumps all morning and had in fact, he realized, lessened the gravity of the mud, which would have lessened strain on the hose. What else had he done? He thought more carefully, could think of nothing. He may well have killed Webster, if indirectly, he mused. Maybe they had been right in accusing him. Then again, the most logical reason for the accident was a failure in the fastening of the kelly hose, a failure of equipment. Or of whomever had put the hose on the swivel in the first place, in which case Jack had been

summarily run off on the basis of his estrangement from Carpenter and O'Brien. This seemed more likely to him, he decided, and immediately began to wonder if it seemed more likely to him because the alternative deemed him a murderer through negligence.

"Was it my fault?" Jack said to his father. "No. I don't think so." He paused. "They ran me off because they needed someone to blame."

"What happened?"

Jack's voice seemed to him unnaturally calm as he answered, as though he were reading a script. "I was down at the pits checking the mud, and Bob, the driller, gave a shot on his horn signalling that he wanted everyone up on the floor. When I got up there I saw Chris—I'm sure I told you about him—Chris Webster?" His father nodded. "I saw Chris lying on the floor up against the chain guard. He had been marking off the kelly with a piece of chalk like we do sometimes and to do it he had been kneeling on the floor next to the rotary table. Do you know what the kelly hose looks like? How it comes down from above and then goes back up again into that U-shape before it reaches the level of the swivel? As he was kneeling there that kelly hose came loose for some reason and all the tension in that bend in the hose (which is three or four inches thick, or course) whipped it down at him, and though this part may not have even hit him there's a steel fitting on the end of the hose where it goes into the union on the swivel, and the fitting had torn off so that it was sharp and jagged. In any case, the hose slapped down at him and caught him right on the shoulder and then sort of went down through his side and scooped everything out. It eviscerated him just the way we used to do the catfish down at Chandler's Ranch." He stopped in confusion at his use of this unexpected metaphor.

His father drove in silence for a few seconds, then said, "I take it this killed him."

Jack frowned. "Yes, you could say that. It killed him incredibly quickly. Probably even before he had a chance to pee from the shock of it"—something his father had told him about gunshot victims in the war. This last remark of his had a saddening effect on Jack for some reason. As he said later, "It might have been the immense suddenness or the appalling sudden violence of the accident but it seemed disconcerting the more you thought about it. At first the suddenness of it seemed in its own way merciful. He probably never even saw the Damoclean blur of the straightening hose as it swept down and through his body and he almost certainly didn't hear it. Though I have since spent many long hours wondering in bed what kind of sound it must have made up close, and his head had to have been empty of thinking by the time it bounced on the checkerplate of the floor in a torrent of his already swirling blood and the drilling mud vomited out on him by the hose that had killed him. So, we said, his death was in its brutal immediacy a gift, sparing him the agony it undoubtedly would have left him in if he had not died. But then I started thinking that it had also deprived him of the knowledge of his own last moment of existence, that instant that we've speculated about so much in which the instant awareness of the conclusion of your life carries with it an avowal of the horror and beauty of what you're leaving behind and the simultaneous abrupt

wondering appraisal of what is about to happen next. The impossibility of your annihilation suddenly becomes utterly possible, an intense, removed vitality of perception pervades everything, there is choking amazement suddenly backlit by your retreating horror, and you realize that in the next nanasecond or so your body'll be untenanted. Then you're treated to the sensation of yourself quitting the premises through the mouth, as in a Hieronymous Bosch or some other painting of the early grotesque, or perhaps simply ascending in an acorporeal copy of yourself from the prone corpse and rising through the air as you watch the scene, the drilling rig floor or the battlefield or the intersection, diminish below you the way we portray it in cartoons or commercials, or even leaping into the body of the nearest available bear and settling in there, as the Apache have said happens to the purgatory-bound. I wondered then where, if anywhere, Chris was going, if he would get there down the glowing mysterious tunnel that we have learned about from those we've brought back from the experience, the flooding of the body's shell by a pain that fills the mind that's left with a dazzling pure whiteness of comprehension that lifts you to a level of consciousness whose altitude we can only throw darts at in our ignorance. But by the time I had reached air this thin I gave up with the realization that theorizing this recondite was not particularly satisfying or fruitful, and I was left only with the image of Chris lying there against the chain guard, and the knowledge that death is the only experience of your life that is totally yours."

Jack did not say much more for the rest of the ride home. His father spoke a few times about various things and Jack gave obligatory answers or entered into brief, unfelt dialogues. Jack for the most part sat upright in his seat in pale inactivity, avoiding thoughts of the day as much as possible, and watched the land going by in its endless and atypically green monotony in an effort to lull himself into unconsciousness. He felt exhausted beyond feeling, and all he felt able to do was sit in his seat and look out at the land.

When they finally pulled up in front of Jack's apartment his father asked him, "Would you like to go out to dinner tonight, maybe? You look like you could use it."

Jack looked at him. "I would, as a matter of fact. What time is it now?"

"About three o'clock."

"Sure. I've got a few things I need to do first. Think you can come by about six?"

"Certainly. Where do you want to go?"

"Oh, hell, I'll leave that up to you." Jack started to get out of the car, then turned and looked at his father. "By the way, I just thought I'd mention I think I'm going to take a vacation. I kind of feel up for a rest."

His father raised his eyebrows and asked, "Where do you think you're going to go?"

Jack smiled. "I don't know yet. I'll tell you tonight." He got out of the car and went inside. In the hall he passed by Tom's room and saw that his roommate was asleep in bed. Jack tried to remember where Tom had said he was going last night, but couldn't. It seemed to him that Tom had said something about a long

run, but where Jack could not remember. Jack went into his own room and took off his clothes and put them with the bundle he had been carrying into the clothes basket in his closet. Then he showered, and as he was drying off he asked himself if he felt hungry anymore. He answered that he did not and decided he could go for a long time yet without food. Wondering at his lack of hunger he dressed and carried the basket of clothes out to his car. He drove to the laundromat and handed his basket to the lady behind the table.

"You can take your time with these, ma'am," he said to her. "I won't be needing any of them for a while, at least."

"Wait," she said. "We've got some others ready for you. You were just in here last about three days ago, weren't you?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Are you on vacation or something?"

"No," he answered. "Just taking a few days off." He opened the door, then looked back at her. "Actually, I guess you could say that. Yeah, I am on vacation now."

"Have a good one," she said, giving him a wave. In the cavernous shade of the room, which had no windows, she was barely visible to Jack with his head already outside in the blazing light.

"Thanks," he said. "You have a nice evening." Then he got back in his car and drove to McSpadden. He drove the twenty miles slowly and tried to savor the sensation of not having to get anywhere in time for work. He hadn't driven to the office in McSpadden for several months, since he had been getting all of his checks out at the rig. When he got into town he drove straight to the office, saying to himself when he saw the sign "Peppercorn Drilling, McSpadden, Texas," and was satisfied to see that the shop looked the way it had when he had worked there. He walked in and handed the pink slip that Carpenter had given him to the receptionist behind the glass.

"I'd like my check now, please, if that's all right."

"Sure," she said. She looked down at the slip in her hand and frowned slightly. "This is just for the rig, you know. You can stay and work in the shop if you want until you can go out again. You'd make whatever you're making now while you're in the shop."

"I'm a derrick hand," he said. "I make eleven fourteen an hour. I used to, I mean. I quit."



David Dubow: *Soldiers, Jerusalem, 1978*



Mary Ann Blatt: *Beaufort, Spring 1981*



David Dubow: *Afternoon Fog, Saugatuck*, 1976



David Dubow: *Headsails, Sea of Cortez*, 1978



David Dubow: *Dance of the Onion*, 1977

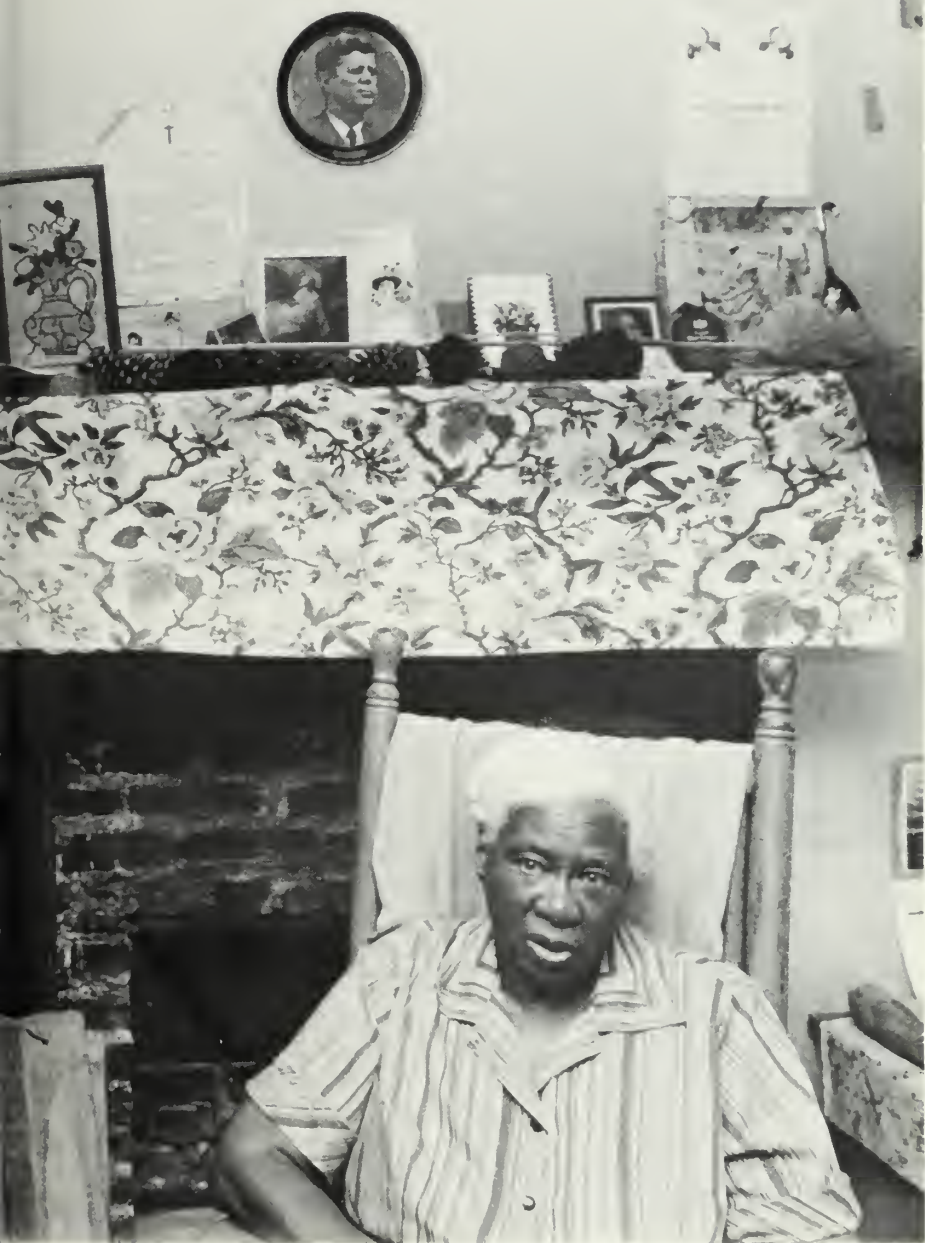
Choctaw County, Alabama

This predominantly rural region is one of the poorest in the country. Its history involves feuds over moonshine and marches for rights. It involves a deep dedication to religion. It involves traditions in blues singing, quilting, farming and story-telling. Most of all, it involves a strength and wisdom which has come with the struggle to survive.

I traveled to Choctaw County to work with Jane Sapp of Miles College. Ms. Sapp is dedicated to preserving this heritage. It is her ultimate goal to design an educational package and to distribute it throughout the public school systems. In this way it is hoped that the young will learn and the old realize the uniqueness and importance of their cultural traditions.



Joann Diverdi: *Rev. Julian Johnson, county commissioner*



Joann Diverdi: *Daisy Parker, retired teacher*



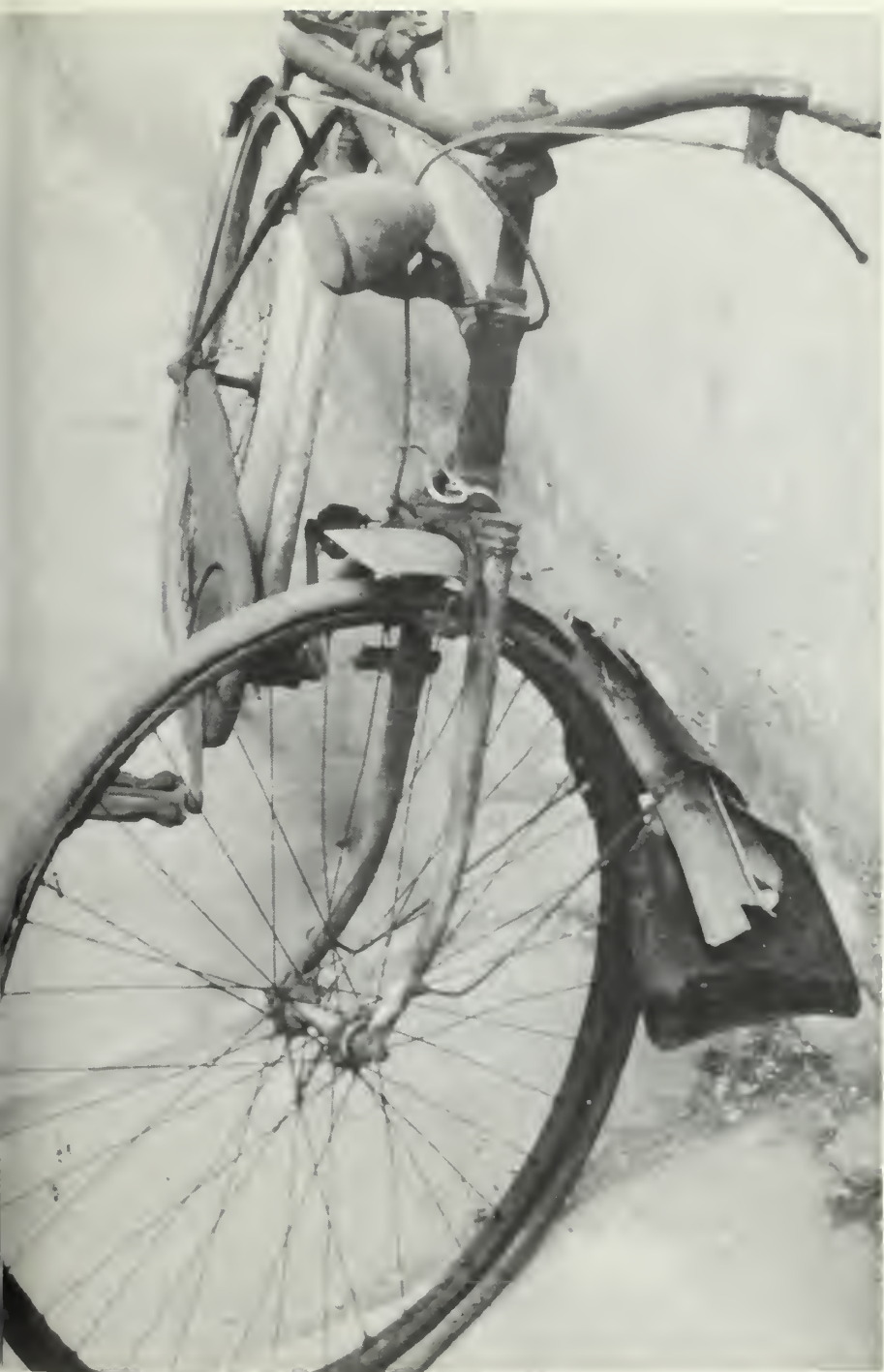
Joann Diverdi: *Baby Johnson with her homemade quilt*



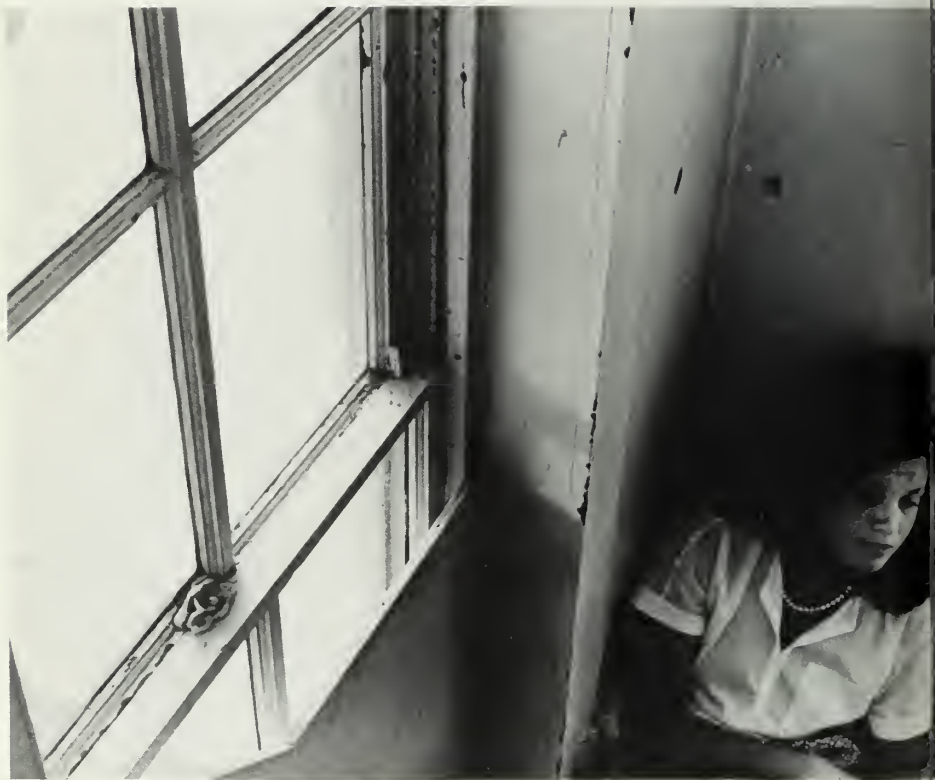
Joann Diverdi: *Mrs. Olivia Kinniebrew*



Joann Diverdi: *Receiving the Holy Spirit*



Kitty Harmon: *Borgo Pinti, Florence*



Donna Jackson: *Basement Window*



Donna Jackson: *The Dance Barre*



Donna Jackson: *Erica*



Donna Jackson: *Empty Theatre*



Karen Dubilier: *Bedouin Man*

The Anniversary

Washing the white linen
from last night's spilled wine,
she lets the water
trickle upward in cold paths,
working high, past her elbows.
She does not understand how
the drops climb her pink skin,
when she is bending downwards.

Touching her there last night,
William still did not understand
how women love.
Someone, maybe her mother,
warned her years ago,
there is no equating a man's emotions
to a mother's, to a daughter's,
to a wife's.

Perhaps she learned it last night
when William asked his brothers to come,
to sip their wine, to shuffle cards,
to whisper about their boyhood.

Or learned it near dawn,
when his brothers had taken
the last taxi back to town
and William moved to her,
as if they had been alone all night.

Before the Vows

When they take it, this trust,
through the old cobbled streets,
when they enter this town church
that has stood since 1692—
Amelia will not be remembering
her watery baptism here,
nor the muffled voices
of her father's funeral.

She will be praying
that from where he stands, waiting,
tears caught by the candlelight
will seem to be seed pearls.

She is lifting to him
as if from another century—
he is gathering her up
like an old hoop gown
of bright ballroom colors,
unfurled from the attic trunk,
torn from the solitude of decades.

Once he spoke to her
of his branded vision—
she in red morning dress at seven,
with the scent of buttering toast
around her, bringing him
fresh and warm from his bath.
Amelia answered in a small way
that at six, she would draw the water.

Now, in the church,

she turns her chin to the ground
and sees colors running quickly from her
like the fading of dresses
being brought out to oxygen,
to the harshness of light.

At Water's Edge

Her ankles are lucid
in the coolness now,
as she carries on a communion
with the water's sound,
covering her mind's voice with
the stroking of feet
through the blue-green surface.
Her toes dot the water
like dull seed pearls,
bringing glass-blown bubbles
up and up, weighing on her skin—
rising to the surface,
coupling and returning.

Bolder, she covers her hands,
dips them down and then
withdraws quickly
over and again, until,
repetition like hypnotism,
she slides from the heat of the rocks
into water—cover—like night,
and peace. Submerging,
the churning mind—the ache—
converges into the point of nothing
with the dive.

She raises her arms
like a dancer on stage,
as if to pull air down with her
in a saving arabesque,
cool it in the lake mother's honey—
save the nothingness of the

settled sky from its own paleness.
The air's grasp is heavy and unyielding
while, mindless, this water womb
clings to her like liquid mercury,
possessing the final power
of absorption.

She is one thought,
water and mind. One body,
one voiceless sound:

*No mercy, safe now
in this flowing, flowing ever on,
where nightmares are harmless.
Nurturing, fluidity,
such warm hollows
as death is made of.*

Reachings

Home again for the shortest visit possible, I'd brought
Dirty jeans, underwear, socks—an embarrassing
Supply. Mother smiled, strangely grateful.
My father was very ill. Her voice,
Strained over miles of wire, had fetched me.

The house too small and full of things that know me,
I wandered in the orchard that is our back yard,
The pecan trees evenly spaced on the ground
But linking arms nearer the sky:
The fork I'd sought for refuge, jutting root
I'd split my head on. The runt-tree,
Stunted early by Hazel—my favorite, trunk
Exactly the size, in those days, of my waist.
Age hasn't improved its looks, I realized, nor mine;
But I yielded to the old temptation to lie beneath it
And feel my own roots struggling to take hold,
My own boughs groping like hands for sunlight.

And yet only here in clear winter night, keeping her company
As she hangs my Cloroxed clothes on the line,
Do I see us and our trees—
Bare limbs splayed weird as witches' fingers,
Stroking Orion, invisible Andromeda:
Supplicating in gnarled blackness this inquisition of stars.

The Grieving

It begins as a cry in a room
In a house with a wreath
Beneath a naked bulb. Awnings
Rip away, scatter, shattered from
Within. A dove on the wing outside
Explodes without sound, bits
Of down floating by like soiled snow.
The heart is too bright,
Not made for more than glance.

And then the bulb shorts out. Pupils,
Relieved, enlarge. Sills take on
Sheen, dusted by a breeze
Bearing feathers. Breathing
Breaks the silence. The eyelids
Sink shut, darkly bathing,
Recalling a light made lavender
Passing through windows in churches.

*The Eyes of Black Women**

Floating up from faces of bodies
Lounging on porch steps,
Hip-hauling braid-headed babies,
They witch my off-white soul:
Perfect orbs of void
Imprisoned in pools of scalded milk
From cows long slaughtered—
To me a silent startling looming.

(Suddenly dark on the street.
Black on black, clouds
On my eyes pull me in
To a starless space. No light
Anywhere, no help or love in sight.)

They tell me my eyes change color
Depending on the light.
Our stares connected, they darken,
Fail in their part of a blighted beam.
Even white is wasted in a sunless room.

**Newman Ivey White Award for Poetry*

*The Road Back**

His jaw dropped—dumb as a cow—when I said, “Norman, my boy, I see you got my post card; what brings you all the way out here?” Speechless, absolutely speechless—for about the first two minutes. By the time I unlocked the door to the motel room, Norman had found his tongue and was looking for the bathroom. That was the way it always was with Norman: he had to stake out the nearest rest room wherever he went. Why, I remember taking him to the World’s Fair when he was twelve. Cotton-candy stand. Men’s room. Roller coaster. Men’s room. House of Mirrors. Men’s room. I was forever telling Otto that his son was just too high strung. Norman never changed. He was still carrying that old company briefcase with Cold-Eze embossed all over the vinyl and brimful with nose drops and cough lozenges and cold tablets. I was tempted to ask him for a sample but I didn’t think he’d see the humor.

“Are you out of your head, Uncle Ulrich? What’s this nonsense about driving cross-country? Running away at your age! Why didn’t you leave a note?” That boy asked as many questions at thirty as he did at thirteen.

“Look, you, just hold your horses. That’s no way to greet your uncle. Maybe I did leave a little sudden, but I don’t see what age has to do with it! Abraham left home and he was older than me. I don’t want to start a new nation; I just want to go to Las Vegas. I should have left that farm twenty years ago. Do you know that all these Howard Johnsons have ice machines?”

“Uncle, you’ve been missing for over a week and I don’t want to talk about ice machines! I want to talk about your mental health. I’m beginning to wonder if they’re not right about you at home.” He cut himself short. He didn’t need to say it all. Lord bless us, he was serious. He was quite serious. He thought I was senile. Why he thought I was turning as senile as Otto.

“Spit it out, son. Say it! Say: ‘Uncle Ulrich, everybody thinks you’re losing it.’ Yes sir, you figure I’m going the way of your father.”

“That’s not what I said. Dad is a lot different than you.”

“Damn right he is! Otto Bruegler isn’t at all like me: he’s not even like himself anymore. He’s nothing more than some senile, old crank who slobbers and whines and slumps in that wheelchair. What does he do all day? Just sits. He sits and eats and craps in his pajamas then waits for his next meal.”

“Please, Ulrich. That’s my father.”

I had no intention of getting Norman so upset. Maybe I did come across coldhearted, but could Norman really understand my point of view? Otto Bruegler had been my best friend for as long as I could remember. Longer. Sometimes I can't lay my memory on what I was doing sixty seconds ago, let alone sixty years, but I can tell you when I met Otto: it was during the war. Somehow we just never split up; we stuck together and started the grocery store down on Tabor Road. We were business partners for forty some years. When it came to marrying time, I was Otto's best man and of course he stood for me and Lena. I was Norman's godfather. Reminiscing wasn't going to make Norman feel any better and it wouldn't do much for me either. I gave up self-pity and cigarettes at sixty-five—just weren't good for my health.

"Now, Normie, you know how I love your daddy. I've visited him religiously at that home every Thursday afternoon for the last six years. Played cards with him every Saturday night for the last sixty—except for lately. Nobody likes to see your daddy this way. Not me, not you, nobody. Take my hanky and get all this moping out of your system. There now, slip off your shoes, let go of your briefcase and stretch across the bed."

It didn't take much convincing to put Norman to sleep. If I knew Norman—and I knew Norman—he got my post card yesterday and drove the five hundred miles nonstop. There was no slowing that boy down once he got something in his head.

As soon as he started to snore, I picked up my walking stick and stepped outside the motel. Norman would be hungry when he woke up so I went looking for a take-out place. Norman never ate out because of his ulcer; a change would be good for him. I guess that's what I was thinking when I sent him the post card in the motel desk drawer. It was a real nice little card that showed the pool and a sample bedroom and the dining room downstairs all decked with tablecloths. All I wrote was: "Having wonderful time. Going cross country! Headed for Vegas. Love, Uncle." I was sort of bargaining on Norman coming when I bought the stamp, at least I hoped he would.

I stopped at Norman's car to pick up his suitcase. That car was not only owned by the company, it was obsessed by it. The back seat and trunk were just crammed with the latest line of cough syrup and even the bumper sticker said something about sinuses. I crossed the parking lot and opened the trunk on my Rambler. I was real conscientious about putting my car keys right back in my pocket to avoid losing anything else.

I had to be extra careful with Norman come to visit. If I was going to convince him to travel with me I had to look sharp. Maybe, I needed convincing myself. *No, I knew what I was doing.* I couldn't swear exactly where I was going but, for the most part, I knew what I was doing. One thing was for certain: I was never going back to that empty farm. The cat was dead; the cows were sold; the fields were rented, and the TV was broken. And as for my best friend, he didn't even recognize me anymore.

A horn startled me and for a few seconds I couldn't quite remember why I was in that parking lot. I was standing in front of my open trunk with tears rolling down

my face, a spade in my hand, and no earthly idea why. It was a bit of a struggle bending down to pick up the walking stick that had rolled under the car. It was even harder picking up that last piece of memory. It took some reaching to realize it was thinking about Otto that made me so sad. My mind must have wandered while I was looking through the tool box in the trunk. I had picked up the spade without even knowing it. I always kept it with the clippers for fixing the geraniums and trimming around Lena's gravestone. I put back the spade and pulled out an old bottle—schnapps—it had been there for years.

Norman was still napping when I returned with the pastrami sandwiches and the schnapps. As long as he was asleep I decided to do some wash in the bathroom sink. It's just lucky that the motel gave out so many midget bars of soap; they were just the right size for washing socks. I had to be careful, though, about hiding the used bars where the maid couldn't find them. She'd throw them away even if they were just the least bit torn. The noise from the faucet woke Norman and he was not going to be happy with my socks dripping all over the tile.

"What are you doing, Uncle Ulrich?"

"Washing. Need anything washed?"

"No, but listen. You aren't mad, are you—that I followed you here." That Norman had always been sweet when he woke up from a nap.

"Of course not. I sent you the post card, didn't I?"

"Exactly! I knew you sent for me on purpose. Then you will come home with me!"

"Not on your life, Norman."

"Be reasonable!" Norman was quickly getting annoyed with me. He was out of bed and searching his suitcase for Maalox; unfortunately, Norman's company didn't carry a line of antacid. "Do you call this normal behavior for a seventy-eight year old? How can you expect that old car of yours to make it clear across the country? I'm surprised it hasn't broken down yet."

"There is absolutely nothing wrong with that Rambler, Norman, and I would kindly ask you to watch what you say about it. You weren't so choosy when it came to taking it to your senior dance, now were you?"

"That was over fifteen years ago!"

No, it couldn't possibly have been that long ago. But it was. I was slipping and Norman knew it. He just stood there staring and sizing up my senility; he couldn't understand. Norman couldn't possibly know how getting older wrinkles certain parts of your brain and folds some pieces of the past right next to each other. Then there are some parts that just get squeezed out altogether; numbers generally disappear first. Fifteen years, five years—it all seemed the same. Suddenly I found myself grabbing onto dates and figures I could still recall. It helped me keep the decades straight and besides, it made me look sharp. If I could just quote my odometer or reel off the original store mortgage, or complain about the motel bill, then Norman would be content. He figured as long as I was holding onto numbers, then I wasn't slipping away; I wonder if Otto was still keeping numbers in his head?

"As long as we're on the subject of flying the coop, let's talk about you, Norman."

I had to do something to turn the conversation. "Did you go to work today or visit your poor old father? Does your ex-wife know you're going cross country? For shame on you—walking out like that!"

"Crazy old man! You know damn well how I bust my butt working. I never wanted that divorce! I'm no *deserter*! It's so ridiculous I don't know why I'm arguing. I'll be back on that job Monday and don't you get any ideas otherwise."

"You're a free man, Norman. No job, no wife, and a wonderful travelling companion. How many other boys your age have a rich old uncle to take them on vacation?"

"I'm thirty-two years old."

"Did you ever see Disneyland, Norman?"

"I'm married."

"Divorced, Norman, divorced. When will you get it through your head? Wouldn't you love to see the Grand Canyon?"

"I've got responsibilities, Uncle Ulrich."

"Come on, remember how much fun we had at the World's Fair?"

"I was twelve!"

"So your tastes change. We'll go to Las Vegas. Take a chance. You're dull, Norman."

"That's easy for you to say. You're hitting those high numbers, Ulrich. You make a mistake and how long do you have to live with it?"

"Norman, I propose a toast."

Before he could get another word in, I was unwrapping the sanitized plastic cups and pouring the schnapps. I don't think the bottle had been opened in ten years—in fact, it was probably last opened at Norman's wedding. Now that was a day! Otto and I had one helluva time doing shots along with the polka. I bought a camera special for that day; I remember the four of us posing in front of the church with our Norman. Do you know that's the only picture I have of all of us together?

When we closed down the store and I moved to the farm, I figured we'd be doing a lot more dressing up. I told Otto it was about time we invested in one of those Brownie cameras. I always regretted not getting more pictures of Norman as a kid. No, I wasn't going to make the same mistake when Norman's little ones came along. That's the time to which I most like to return; we were all starting to live a little easier. But first there was my Lena and then Otto's wife. I guess Otto is next. Maybe not. He might surprise us and outlast us all; maybe I'm the next to go.

"But alcohol isn't good for my ulcer, Uncle Ulrich."

"That's not alcohol; it's schnapps. It's just like medicine. Did I tell you the one about the worms and the glass of schnapps?"

"As a matter of fact you did."

"Well, this man is worried about his drinking habit so he decides to put some worms in a glass of schnapps. So they all died. So then he asks himself, '*What's the meaning of this?*' "

"Yes, yes, Uncle Ulrich. What's the meaning of this?"

"So the man decides: if you drink schnapps, you'll never get worms! You like that

Norman: *drink schnapps and you'll never get worms*. You hear that before? You aren't laughing."

"Yeah, you told me it a couple of times. But it's still a great joke." The schnapps was burning in my throat—maybe it was just my pride. I hated repeating myself and Norman was making excuses for me. It was just a slight hearing problem or lapse of memory. Norman would have to understand.

"And what shall we drink to?" I was hoping Norman didn't see me lose my balance as I stood up without my walking stick. "Shall we drink to our trip?"

"Drink to whatever you want but I'm not going to listen to you if you start on this trip stuff again."

I gave him the sourest look I could muster and raised my glass.

"I propose a toast to Norman's ulcer. Better yet; I propose a toast to Norman's newest product. In fact, I toast all those sample bottles and boxes wherever they may be hiding—in Norman's trunk, briefcase, glove compartment, and pockets. *Ein Prosit!* By the way, how much are you making a year now, Norman?"

"Just shut up about my lousy job, okay. It's bad enough without you teasing me." He rolled over on the bed and tucked his head under the pillows.

Now that wasn't Norman talking; the kid had his first job at ten; he loved to work. Otto started him out as box boy at the store and he just never went home. He was crazy about it—especially on pay day. Norman was always ambitious and he was the tightest little kid that ever did rub two nickels together. Otto once mentioned how Norman wouldn't even buy his high school ring because it cost too much. Things like that made Otto proud. Not that he said it, Otto would never brag about his kid or give him a compliment. Most times I didn't mind it too much, but that time was different. It made me so mad about Norman's class ring; I went out and bought it myself.

I gave Norman a quick knock on the butt with my stick and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Norman, you don't really mean that about your job. You've always done well; everybody says so. You have a head for business, just like your daddy. How about another shot of schnapps?"

"Just a little. Listen, forget what I said about the job. It's just great. No problem. In less than fifteen years I can start collecting partial retirement and then pick up something else. I could always invest in a little piece of land like you did. You know. That used to be my big dream after I got married: moving out of the apartment and getting a big yard. I would dream about having you and the folks over for chicken on the grill and having some kids to wear out the lawn." I just smiled and thought about my Brownie camera. It was good to know I was included in Norman's plans; he was always included in mine.

The room turned quiet and I just sat there rubbing Norman's head. I wasn't in that Howard Johnson's at all. No. Norman and I were sitting pretty in lawn chairs and smelling the chicken sizzle on the grill. We were in Norman's dream yard watching the barbecue coals glow and making sure the children didn't move too close. We were sipping schnapps together like father and son. The next thing I

know Otto comes wobbling out of the back screen door headed toward the coals. He was bound to burn himself.

"Don't Otto! *You'll wreck everything.*"

"What did you say, Uncle Ulrich?" Norman jumped straight up. I was talking to myself and Norman knew it. I had to stop doing that; I had to stop going back in time; otherwise, I might get stuck there and never return.

"Nothing. Nothing." He didn't pester me to talk. What could we say about Otto? He was old and bitter and as far as I was concerned he was gone. "Norman, I said goodbye to Otto last week. I'm not going back to see him again. I'm not going home." Norman sat there without saying anything and held my hand some. I had always liked playing daddy to Norman when Otto didn't have time. I liked holding his baby hand, leading him to the rest room, and taking trips with him.

Norman walked over to the dresser and picked up the bottle; he refilled both our glasses.

"Go easy, Norman. I really do have to use that bathroom. Hand me my walking stick, would you?"

"Here, let me show the way." Leaning on Norman was more of a hindrance than a help but I liked leaning on him just the same. We almost went down together when Norman tripped over his briefcase of samples.

"Damn that thing!"

"That's the spirit, Norman!"

"Damn that Cold-Eze Company!"

"That's my Norman, show them what you're made of!"

"And damn that car and that job and that apartment!"

Before I knew quite what was happening, Norman opened the briefcase and was pouring cold tablets, cough drops, nose drops, you name it, all over the bed and floor. He set the trashcan on the dresser and proceeded to shoot baskets from the corner of the room.

"Come on, Uncle Ulrich, give her a dunk. See if you can't land one of those little bottles right in the basket."

"Norman, I couldn't throw straight if I wanted to." I was laughing so hard, the tears were running down my face.

"Just watch me." Norman sailed the aerosol sinus spray easily into the can.

I don't know why, but somehow or other I was saluting him with my walking stick.

It was Norman's turn to start laughing again so he flopped on the bed and sent those samples bouncing off the mattress.

"I'm thirty-two and I've never seen Disneyland. What do you think, Ulrich? Will it be as good as the World's Fair?"

"Better."

"And the Grand Canyon. Will it be as big as they say?"

"Bigger."

"Then I say let's go!"

"Right now, Norman?"

"Right now, Ulrich!"

And I jumped from the chair to head towards the door but my old legs wouldn't listen to me. I didn't feel too bad; Norman's legs didn't listen to him either. Suddenly, we weren't laughing anymore. Norman tried to start us on another round but it just didn't work.

We stayed there a good while just staring at the walls, and listening to the air conditioner. I studied the patterns in the rug and wallpaper until my head hurt. When Norman made his way to the bathroom and turned on the shower, I pulled myself up from the chair and began gathering all those miniature bottles and pill packets. Norman came out and we finished the job together in silence. With the samples returned neatly to their case, Norman began his bedtime routine: alarm set, covers straightened, lights off—ticked off like points on a check list. I got ready for bed and joined Norman in the wait for sleep. He had a long drive home in front of him tomorrow.

"Uncle, you asleep yet?"

"No."

"Remember how long it used to take me to fall asleep when we stayed overnight anywhere?"

"Yes, Norman."

"You would check under the beds and in the closet just to prove how safe it was. Do you know you used to wait with me for as long as it took to fall asleep?"

"Did I, Norman?"

"Do you remember our trip to the World's Fair? Why, do you remember where we stayed?"

"No, Norman, I don't recall. Where did we stay?"

**Newman Ivey White Award for Fiction*

What Rainbows Mean to Covenants
(on vacation in New Mexico)

Disc of glare, feeding flies,
Hairy, rotting bank:
The lakes—Fir, Miserable, Pine—
Man-made gouges in a chain.
Thunderclouds are grinding over ours;
My dad has lost his eye in the water's
Crosshatched shine, dreaming
Of the down-jabbing line, the slab
Of panting zinc hauled in
Through minnows' explosions.
Dead as trees, we breathe on sun, we wait.
My dream: when we get home
The cease-fire ends, internecine
Marriage burns me to a stump.
This is history, actually—
The two of them raging at light,
The three of us bleeding dry,
Our cabin strains to hold in the fighting.
Blinded, tongue turned to glass,
I don't participate, but swing
On my rope from loft to loft,
Or take revenge on the cutting board's
Fillets—nude, corrugated flesh
Curls like a scar-lip from the blade.
Each fish has shucked its skin:
Wine, violet, Virgin's blue
Have slackened to a slurry
In the garbage.
Their colors used to lift me up . . .

Waiting here, counting grains of sand,

It's the day's last kingfisher
That renews me.
Everything else is quiet.
Tonight, I moon, the moon will put
Its plate of light to this water,
A circle for me to stand on.
I will learn to let my soles
Move on the waves, to plead
The peace of trout that stoop like owls
Through crew-cut moss, water
Dead-star cold, groves of hooks
And leaders bright as eyes
That beckon, killing hope—
The fish prowl bluntly, never blink
As they wait to be turned inside-out,
Showing us the way: *For you, the price
Of pain is understanding;
For me, it was myself.*

Gleaner's Offering

Our two white pews were at the front,
facing the choirs, backed by the Daughters of Lydia.
We lay our sweat on polished wood and tamped

our whiteness into our shoes. Our color was
suspended for the service's duration—
the only other white man in the place

was Christ, veined with lead, sloe-eyed
and half slaughtered, never avenged, his cross
balanced on a body of jazzy, slivered plates.

His flanking choirs icons of a different
kind, they tuned up at the base of sound,
stepping into blinded sway with a voice.

Every sound mounted in its own throat,
every hand broadened the air with its flapping,
a spate of tides in singing, compelling us

to cow the sleepers with our generous Amen.
Who can fill a hymn with blood?, our preacher
asked when they were done. The organist still

grieved behind, in his mirror's fish-tank quiver.
I was offered a Prayer Request slip, and offered
it to my grandma, lying sewn-up

and wasted in my brain, wire-gutted
and backed on emptiness as she tried to blink
through the sun-weave of her closing eyes. Her name

challenged me, neglected, but I wrote something
that gave a knell. My sacrifice was small
compared to our pastor's, whose day-glo cassock

bloomed with the heat as he looped us
in his mike cord, calling to that old tickle
in the blood, calling to her knotted ears,

dripping sweat into her opened eyes,
as held back her lids with his straining voice:
"That slow tapping in your skull is something

trying to get out, and spread the blaze of living
through the cross members of your head." For her
his breath was vengeful, as though smelling well water.

I imagined her drifting with tear-flooded breath
through regions of Christ, his glassy, Jovian side wound
echoing hers. The offertory came:

every eye, every coin was bright
as a nail through tithe and collection.
It was for us to listen and sing, leaving ourselves

singed but grateful. For my grandmother
faith was mute before it had a voice.
Now I supplied her with words: unknown to me

still, she rolled back her stone and came, joining
our unanimous, migratory voice.
When we finally prayed for requested names, hers

made a sound of its own, old white lady
invited to an altar she never suspected. Her name
moved in my blood, then diminished like a star.

Rapture, though, has always fueled itself.
Our final song was strong as shape-note singing,
octaves fat and blended in the air

the way, afterward, in the bright starched morning
of a summer, all kinds of fluids,
desperation, stirred in the colors of my face.

Gretel's Deceit

I have misplaced the reason
 why I followed you here

decades ago
you seduced the one of me
who craved the candied vines of sterile forests

bread path gone
you ate my way home
like some unholy communion

I wander alone now
 without
 bloodroot, whippoorwill
 hemlock, dew
 sky night, poplar
 hunger, moon
 all pulse of that which is good and true
 all rich language
muted
swallowed
by you and your disciples

Rainbow

The hounds-in-the-night-under-the-gazebo-framed-by-the-moon man
pulled the scarf out of my soul like a magician
colors (I never dreamed myself an artist)
unfolded all the night from my mouth in gentle strokes
like a rainbow.

By day, I'm having to tuck the scarf back in
carefully
fold by fold.

Simon Barjona

I open my eyes—darkness. The air is damp. The stone floor is cold and slick. The low ceiling sweats drops of water which fall by my head. Their gentle dripping is the only sound.

I can taste the lake in the air. It tastes like dead fish and soggy wood. Always when I return, it's the first thing I notice. It's like a loyal friend, always there. I wish I could go back to sleep with that taste thick in my mouth. But it's time to get up. Andrew said he wanted to be on the water by dawn. You can bet he's up by now, probably waiting at the dock. He's always been like that. He doesn't mind waking early. I'll have to ask him how he does it. I struggle beneath the coat of dark. I stretch and skin my knuckles on the stone ceiling. My muscles are weak and stiff. I shuffle about blindly, pawing the darkness. I wish I could wake up. I lunge for the door. I can't see it but know it's there, opening on fresh air, the lake, the world.

The chain jerks me back to reality. I don't brace against the fall and smash my head on the floor. I feel the oozing blood, then the bump rising. I find the chain and yank and yank and yank till my hands bleed. The night guard pounds on the door and threatens me with more lashes. I feel the stripes then. They have scabbed over while I slept and the hopeless yanking opened them. The pain burns. I don't dare touch them. I stand and grope along the wall till I find the one blanket, filthy but folded neatly. I sit on it, lowering myself with my hands holding the wall. Every motion sends pain shooting through my whole body. I sit completely still in the darkness. I wonder if I'll ever see the sun again.

There were many days of sun on the lake. It would rise over the hills of Decapolis and pound brightness on our heads till it set behind the cleft we called the Horns. It would scatter the morning mist and warm our backs till we peeled off our shirts. It would shine hot at noon and bake the cracking earth while we rested in the house or under the trees. Then it would fall sluggishly, dragging itself like a weary snail along the ocean of blue sky. The bugs would come out late, then the swallows. Even after the sun had set, its light lasted far into the night. Pure darkness wrapped the land for only those scarce moments between final dusk and first dawn.

There is no sun in this dungeon, no dawns, no lake. There are no more days of fishing. But there were all those things once. Before I'd met Jesus, before I'd known what it was like to be flogged and thrown in prison, before I'd ever seen Rome or the bloated face of the man who's condemned me to death, I lived on the lake called

Galilee. I wasn't called Peter then. I was Simon Barjona.

The world was big and I was small. Bethsaida seemed a city, the lake an ocean, and Capernaum a faraway place of adventure and heroic men. I'd roam the hills and the shore. I'd swim in the lake and run in the fields. I'd dig about in the dirt like a mole and return filthy at dusk with some chip of stone or shard of pottery around which I'd woven a story as dense as a thicket. I'd tell the story to my brother who was too young to argue. He'd listen calmly till I puffed out my cheeks and told the scary part. Then he'd cry and only my mother could quiet him. She'd glare at me and I'd tell her the truth—I was just telling him a story. She didn't ask what kind.

It never occurred to me to consider whether I was happy or sad, lucky or cursed. The world was endless and full of surprises. It was a kind place too and generous, with blue cold water teeming with the fish my father'd haul in by the bucketfuls and flowers coating the fields so I could bring armfuls to my mother. There was no heaven or hell, no good or evil. There was only life and me in it.

Galilee in the spring is the loveliest place on earth. The winter rains leave the soil moist and the lake full to overflowing. Then the rains stop and the sun shines every day till the fall brings the rains back. By summer, the sun has baked the earth and withered the flowers. But between the rains and the summer, there is the spring.

I spent all my time in the hills. I would leave at dawn and walk along the Jordan till I was deep into the hills that were empty of people but full of flowers and grass and shrubs that talked with the murmur of life swelling inside them. I would eat my bread by the river, scooping water from a still pool and slurping it like a dog, scaring the tiny fish with my mess. I would nap in the shallow caves that were known only to myself and the shepherds who came down from the north. Even when out of sight of the river, I knew where I was and how far from home. I always got back to the house by dark, except once.

I was lying in a field. The grass was tall and fresh and soft. I wasn't sleeping, but I wasn't awake either. I lay on my back watching the sky which never changed or ended. I stretched my arms and legs to match its infinity and rode the sky into slumber. I didn't hear the clumping hooves or the rustling grass or the grating crunch of teeth. But when a ewe roamed within reach of me, I suddenly woke to the real world around me. The ewe snorted and jumped back. I sat up. Everything was motionless, frozen in the instant of my waking. The ewe stood staring, breathless. The rest of the flock was motionless too, all watching, their mouths half-full of grass, their heads cocked at odd angles. Farther up the hill, a black-clad shepherd sat, his hand shading his eyes, looking my way. I thought that I had died and was locked in a frozen, eternal world of sheep and grass.

Then everything was moving. The ewe's lamb, trailing her by a short distance, bounded off, its frightened bleating almost human. The flock broke in every direction. One of the rams headed straight for me, his head low and his eyes glazed with fury and fear. The shepherd jumped and raised his staff and yelled something I didn't understand. In all that motion, I remained unmoving and watched the ram bear down. I remember with perfect clarity the instant before the ram was atop me. I saw every ridge on the full curl of his horns. I saw the individual hairs lining his

puffing nostrils. I saw the red veins bulging in the white surrounding his dense flaming eyes. I smelled the stench of his breath as he exhaled into my face. Then, nothing.

I woke slowly. I kept my eyes shut and listened and smelled and tasted without moving. There was the crackle of a fire and the smell of woodsmoke. There was also the smell of something gamy and wild, a smell like the last thing I remembered from before the darkness. Beside these smells, there was a bitter taste in my mouth, some unclean thing.

I was in no hurry to wake to whatever fate awaited me. Nor was I at all afraid of what I might find, where I might be—a distant and strange land, a slave caravan, a middle world between earth and Sheol: none of the prospects alarmed me. I felt free of all past and all future. I liked the feeling and wished to prolong it. Then I noticed heavy, slow breathing coming from behind me. At the same moment, my whole body began to ache. I was lying on rock and felt every jagged crevice. My arms and legs were cramped. My neck was stiff and sore. Worst of all, my skull made poundings in my ears till I thought I'd explode. I grabbed my head to stop the noise and sat up suddenly.

I was in a shallow cave facing out on stars. A small pile of embers offered little light but much warmth. A rank goatskin was wrapped loosely around my shoulders. The severest pain left and my head cleared. I looked behind me. The outline of a man squatting against the back wall was barely visible. I couldn't tell how he was dressed or what he looked like. But I saw that his eyes were open. They collected the rare light and shined back at me like those of a wild animal caught at the fringes of torchlight. I shivered. My head spun and I fell back against the rock floor.

The man kneeled over me. He straightened the goatskin under my head and threw another over my body. His huge hand brushed my forehead. I screamed and he jumped. I felt warm liquid spring from my wound and wind its way past my eye. The man held out a damp rag, then touched it to his head and pointed to me. I took the rag. It smelled like wine. I touched the spot with it and pain like streaking lightning burnt my body to my toes. My stomach heaved. But the wine smell kept me conscious. The intense pain faded. I nodded thanks to the man. He made no response. He rested on his haunches with his back to the night, watching me. I watched him. Then I fell asleep.

Sun blinded my eyes when I opened them. I stood and had to grab the wall. The whirling cave slowly calmed. From its mouth, I saw the field where the ram had charged me at the base of the slope. Beyond was the river. I could hear the water flowing. Neither the shepherd nor his flock was in sight. The cave was empty. Even the goatskins and the wine rag were gone. I wondered how he'd left so silently.

I stopped at the river and fell by the water. It tasted good and felt cool on my forehead. When I stood, I was stronger. I crossed the river at a ford and walked to the village. The sun rose steadily.

I hear the guard near the door. He turns the key and comes in with a lantern and a plate of food. That means it's morning. He hands me the food and watches me eat. I

ask him if the young man John Mark has come. He says no, no one. Then he tells me that the emperor has forbidden visitors. So now I will see no one. It doesn't matter. John Mark already has my story, or at least the years after I met Jesus. He can use it, the world can use it as they see fit. My mission's finished. All I have to do now is die. I hope I can do it well.

The guard stares at me. He says the night guard complained about my noisiness last night. He asks me why I fought the chains.

"Because I did," I say.

Why must we all die violent deaths? Whom does it serve? First the prophet John, the one they called the baptizer. We should've known then what was in store for us. Jesus knew and tried to tell us, but we didn't believe him. We thought we were safe. Who'd want to harm us? If we'd only known. And what if we had? What if we'd believed what Jesus knew and told us? Would we have followed? After John, they killed Jesus. After Jesus, James the son of Zebedee, my friend since youth. After James, Jesus' brother James. And later, Andrew. There were many others, too many to keep track of—all murdered. And there will be more, myself among them, soon now. All painful, violent deaths. Why?

These doubts are new demons. Till recently, I didn't care how I died or how my brother died. Violence, prison, death—they became part of our lives and mission. As incongruous as it was with our message of peace, the threat of harm became not only a tolerable risk but also a driving force behind our work. The more we were persecuted, the harder we preached. The garden of Christ was fertilized with the manure of persecution. We grew fat on the injustices of our enemies. But I no longer thrive on it. I'm thin and tired and want to rest. I'm worn down by their hatred and prisons and beatings. And I don't want to die. I'm old, but I still have much life in me. Life is dear to me, dear as Andrew was dear, dear as Michal was dear.

Michal! The face of my wife appears before me twisted in the agony of her death, all features knotted. Why now, Michal? Why like this? You were the blossom of my manhood. You were the spring that promised more spring and a long summer. I carried your face everywhere. When I fished, you were in the water beside me; when I walked, you were on the sides of hills, you were in the sky. We were wealthy in our love. We needed nothing more, but we chose to add a child.

That morning you rose as usual and prepared my breakfast. I remember it well—fish, of course, also your flat bread, the kind you made better than anyone, and yogurt from our one goat (tied in the back and bleating throughout our breakfast: did she sense something we didn't?). I wanted to make the meal a feast and suggested we have olive oil and jam. You laughed and said to save the celebration till after the birth. You knew it was near. But I said no and got the treats and we ate them, feasting together in our happiness. We talked in whispers of the child. We wanted to shout and dance, but it was early and many still slept. So we kept our voices low and ate slowly, basking in each other, our opulent future.

You carried the lantern while I carried the nets. The streets were empty except for

the dogs. The boat rocked gently against the dock, knocking wood against wood softly with each wave. The lake was gray under a purple sky. To the left, the craggy hills were edged with gold. You loosed the boat and I pulled on the oars. Suddenly, you doubled in pain. I yanked the boat around and shouted for help. On the dock you quieted me and said it was all right. Your mother would be waiting at the house. I lingered. You gestured toward the lake and smiled and wished me luck. I neglected to wish you the same.

The lake was flat and silent. I rowed to the eastern shore and cast the nets. The sun rose. There were no boats nearby. I tangled two casts and caught the oars on the third. I sat on the rowing seat and took deep breaths. I tried again and managed several casts but caught nothing. I rowed to another spot and cast. Then I rowed south, then toward the middle of the lake. No fish. The sun shone brightly.

I put the nets in the stern and took off my shirt. I rolled my head to the sun with my eyes closed. I felt the sweat rise, bead, and trickle through my beard. The boat floated lazily on the calm water. I was jerked awake by a roar like flood waters. I stood. The boat rocked and I sat heavily on an oar. It creaked under my weight. The roaring was gone. The lake was quiet and empty. Then I heard a woman sobbing. Again I couldn't find the source of the sound. It grew louder, steadily louder till it was all I could hear. Each powerful oar stroke splashed my bare chest as I rowed for the dock.

They held the dead boy out to me as I entered. I pushed them aside and entered the room where Michal lay. She looked at me with eyes that were distant and lost. She didn't speak. I sat beside her. She died in the afternoon while the sun came through the low window and lit the joint between floor and the wall.

Few people now remember Michal. She lived and died before I knew Jesus. They only know Anna, my second wife, who fled Rome after I decided to stay. Michal wouldn't have fled. She would've stayed through it all. But she's dead, buried years ago.

Metal grates against metal. Very dim light, like that of a quarter moon or the dull reflection of clouds at night, spreads through the dungeon. So used to the dark, I can see every niche as if lit by a bright lantern. It's an ugly place. I wish dark would return. I close my eyes, chasing the comfort of blindness. Blindness doesn't come. I see a light steadily growing brighter. It's already bright as noon sun and still increasing, brighter and brighter. It is the sun, a white stone of pure light. I've seen that light once before, with Jesus on Mount Hermon. It's frightening and consoling both—any thing that bright can save or maim at will. The core explodes in my wondering and retreats. I open my eyes on the same dim prison.

The chain reaches just far enough for me to see up the stairs. The slot in the door is open. A face is pushed close, blocking most of the light. It's the guard who brought me breakfast. I wave for him to come down. He backs away, then looks again. I smile and beckon. He hesitates, staring through the slot. Then the key turns and the door creaks open. He carefully relocks it and comes down the stairs holding the lantern. Its modest light is an unexpected gift borne by this young god. I forget all else and watch only him. He sits timidly on the bottom step, beyond my reach.

He's just a boy with curious but cautious eyes. I tell him he needn't be frightened. He looks away. He says he's heard stories. He says he's heard how I'd shed chains and walked past a dozen guards in Jerusalem. I laugh. I tell him there were only four guards, two beside me and one at the first gate and one at the second. The boy quietly raises himself and sits on the third step. He stares at a spot on my chest, ever watchful but refusing to meet my eyes. I tell him the truth about my escape from Herod's prison—I was asleep the whole time; I could only guess what had happened when I woke by Mary's door with the servant bending over me. He listens. When I finish, he asks how such a thing could happen. I speak the truth—I don't know. I tell him other things I don't understand—the walking on the lake, the wild man in the hills, the little dead girl. I tell him about the intense light and Moses and Elijah and the voice. He doesn't know who Moses and Elijah are. I tell him.

Someone calls from beyond the door. The boy grabs the lantern and hurries up the stairs. He looks back, then shuts the door. He locks it and closes the slot. New darkness. If my son had lived, he would've been like that boy—attentive, curious, brave enough to listen but smart enough to keep his distance. If my son had lived.

I blamed myself for the tragedy, especially for Michal's death. It was my son who wrenched life from her. They told me it happened all the time. I told them it happened only once to me. They shook their heads. I spent my days fishing. I spent my nights longing for sleep.

Andrew returned from the south. I told him about Michal. He said he was sorry. Then he told me about a new prophet named John and the wonders and the glory of which John spoke. I gathered and dried the nets and stored them in the house. I pulled the boat onto shore. The next morning we headed south. By midday we were halfway down the eastern shore. We rested in the shade of trees. Andrew went to the lake and came back with his hands cupping water. Most of it had seeped through his fingers. What little remained he sprinkled on my head and down over my bare shoulders. He told me that was what John would do. The act would cleanse my spirit. I laughed and said that if getting wet was what made me pure, I was the purest man alive with all my falling in the lake. Andrew didn't laugh. He said John would show me.

At the river by the ford, the crowd was large. We sat on the bank. A man with a cow-skin girdle stood knee-deep in the muddy water. It was John. He summoned one man at a time from the crowd waiting in the mucky shallows. The summoned man would walk forward and bow before the prophet. Then John would say words and the man would dip himself in the river. After this, the man would stand and receive John's blessing and retreat solemnly. Another would take his place. The procession continued all afternoon. The prophet must've been weary and waterlogged but gave no sign. At dusk he dismissed the crowd. There were many still waiting. They went to their tents along the banks. Andrew said they'd return at dawn to wait. Some would wait days, even weeks.

John waved his arms to keep the crowd from following. Andrew pushed ahead. I bumped into an old woman walking with a stick and knocked her over. She moaned. Several people stepped on her before I could help her up. I brushed off her

dark clothes and walked her to the tent she pointed to. In the firelight I saw her face was wrinkled and splotched. There were two warts on her eyelid. I ran and washed in the river.

Andrew and John and the crowd had disappeared. The river flowed darkly, peacefully. Small fires up and down the banks seemed reflections of the bright new stars. I thought of Michal for the first time since leaving Capernaum. I thought of the lake and fishing. I couldn't imagine why I'd left to follow Andrew to this strange place where people waited weeks to get dunked by a man in Elijah's clothes and women had warts on their eyelids. I splashed to shore and started north, the river my guide and company.

Andrew caught up. I don't know how he found me. He took me to the village of tents and a few shacks. He pulled me up the rocky slope beyond. There was a cave with a fire at its mouth. Men sat around the fire. Andrew spoke. The men greeted him and looked at me. Andrew told them who I was. They stared. We went inside. There was a bend, then another fire with no one near it. Andrew stayed back. I went forward to warm myself. The flames were bright, the only friendly thing I'd seen all day. I melted into their warmth and forgot all else. When I looked up, the man in the cow-skin faced me from beyond the fire. He'd put on a dirty camel's hair mantle. I started to laugh at his odd clothes, then met his eyes. They peeled me naked and fed on my flesh. I wanted to shrink into the shadow but couldn't. I couldn't even look away. We stared at each other, our eyes warring, mine losing. He reached across the fire. He had long arms. He grabbed my forehead with his right hand and held it firmly. I shivered and tried to shake his grasp. I couldn't. He laughed and slowly tightened his grip, his thumb and fingers digging into my temples. I jerked back fiercely like a trapped wolf and he let go. I lost my balance and sprawled on the floor. He laughed loudly and called Andrew forward. He spoke in a Judean dialect and told Andrew I was a leader. He said I had a strong will. Andrew nodded and smiled. I stood and brushed my robe off. I turned to Andrew and asked what this all meant. He shrugged. When I turned to face the fire, John was gone.

I'd had enough of Andrew's friends. I left in the morning. It took two days to reach home. I fished on the third day. Michal's mother cooked my meals. I never saw John the Baptizer again. I heard about him from Andrew and Zebedee's sons. They followed him and were baptized by him. I stayed in Capernaum. I learned to live with loneliness. Then I met Jesus. He baptized me.

The boy asks through the slot what "baptized" means.

I open my eyes. There's the dim light again, sneaking around the edges of the guard's face pressed close. I realize I've been dreaming aloud and feel foolish. That surprised me. I wouldn't have thought I could feel foolish again. It's a pleasant feeling after years of preaching somber truths and being hated and misunderstood for it.

The boy enters and comes down the steps. He asks his question again. I look up and smile and tell him what I've told thousands—about Jesus and baptism and the forgiveness of sins. I tell him the stories I told John Mark, tales from Jesus' life.

Though they're old stories, they seem fresh and alive for the first time in years. The boy is listening and wants to know everything. I want to tell him. We sit and talk.

After a long time, the boy hears something and stands. I rise and stand below him at the base of the steps. I'm cramped from sitting and I stretch. The chain rattles. I feel the scabs on my back begin to pull apart. I stop before the wounds open. The boy says he's sorry I was flogged. I shrug; it wasn't his fault, he didn't swing the whip. He nods but says he's still sorry. He tells me his watch has ended and he must go. But he'll return at dawn with my breakfast. He says he wants to hear more about Jesus. Then his look grows clouded and sad, a foreign expression on a face so young and healthy. He tells what he'd forgot to tell—I'd be executed tomorrow; Nero could be stalled no longer. It's the first I've heard but hardly a surprise. I suddenly realize it doesn't matter. My mission's complete. Telling this boy my news was a fitting end. The boy wipes his tears. He steps forward and presses my hand. I nod thanks and press in response. I'd like to hold his hand awhile longer but can't. I let go and watch him leave. I doubt I'll ever see him again. The thought spawns great sadness in parts of me that have long been numb.

People leave permanently. The shepherd long ago, then Michal, then Jesus, then Andrew, then John Mark. Now this boy. I thought I'd conquered the demons. But no. They're still active, worse than before. The boy has left, a further loss I can't bear. All the violent deaths. All the sudden desertions. Each face rises in the new dark, makes its claim, then fades. One face remains—Jesus. I see him not in the height of his teaching or the glory of his resurrection, but at the pit of despair—the night in Gethsemane.

He'd been acting oddly all week. He was angry about something. He was quick to start shouting or throwing things. He spoke in cryptic parables. When we didn't understand, he called us stupid. We asked what was wrong. He answered in more parables. We pretended to understand, but he knew we didn't. It was a miserable week. Jerusalem was crowded for Passover. Food was scarce and expensive. The weather was cold. I told Jesus I wished we'd stayed in Galilee. He laughed, the only time I saw him laugh during that week. He said he wished we had too.

This was a new Jesus. He'd been moody and violent before, but never this bad. But then we were used to being surprised. It was all we could do to keep up with his sudden changes. Some of the others were impatient with this latest phase. They talked of going home. Jesus overheard Judas speak of leaving and savagely ridiculed him in front of us all. Judas sat and bore Jesus' wrath. His face reddened, but he said nothing.

Toward the end of the week, things quieted. Jesus withdrew into himself. He still walked around the city with us, but he rarely spoke. He didn't knock over any more tables. We gathered in a large room and held the Passover meal a day early. This was odd, but no one asked for an explanation. We remembered his temper from a few days before. Jesus said many things we didn't understand that night. He spoke of a traitor. He blessed the bread and wine with solemn and unusual words. I wanted to ask what it all meant but didn't. We left the room and walked toward Bethany.

It was a clear, chilly night. The city was quiet, preparing for tomorrow's feast. We walked down the steps below the wall and around the base of the Temple and across the Kidron Valley. The hill called Olives loomed darkly ahead of us. We stopped in the trees at its base, near the oil press. Jesus had brought us there before. He told the others to stay and took three of us farther into the grove. He stopped. It was very dark with no moon. I couldn't see his face. He told us to wait while he prayed. I sat against a tree. I was tired from the full day and the wine. The night was very still.

Jesus shook me awake. He let the other two sleep. Though he sounded disappointed, he made a joke about my nickname. I was half-asleep and barely understood. He left. The second time he woke me, he didn't joke. I could tell he'd been crying. I wanted to see his face but couldn't. It was too dark. I pulled on his arm and told him to rest. It was late. He said no and pushed me away. He went into the trees. I stood and followed but got lost. I went back to where the two brothers were sleeping and lay beside them. Jesus never knew I tried to follow him that last time. I never had a chance to tell him. When he woke me the third time, the crowd was approaching. He said it was over. I could finally see his face in the light of the traitor's torch. It was a weary face—surrendered, saddened, streaked with drying tears. It arranged itself in a bitter grin to meet the traitor's kiss. That is how I remember Jesus. The memory is freshly awful each time.

The rest of that night is as clear and persistent as a recurring nightmare: the struggle with Judas' hoodlums, sneaking into the high priest's court, the doorkeeper who recognized me, my cowardly denials and escape. I ran and hid in an alley and pulled my robe over my head. I slept through the afternoon of his crucifixion. I didn't know he was dead till the others told me that night. I'd abandoned Jesus when he needed me most. The guilt of that desertion has never left me.

The long night has begun. I hate the solitude. I dread the endless dark. Well, it's the last night I'll have to get through. It'll all be over tomorrow. But that's little help to me now. I must get through tonight and prepare myself for tomorrow, whatever it's to bring. I walk back and forth along the wall, dragging my hand over the rough rock.

A realization dawns on me calmly and undeniably—I have failed everyone I ever loved. I pause to consider that. It's true. I've let them all down. Jesus, of course, Andrew too. Even when young, I couldn't match his forthright love and devotion. I felt it, but I never told him. Then I married Michal and spent little time with him. That's when he started following John the Baptizer. We were never close again. Even while following Jesus, we shared little. I was Jesus' closest friend; Andrew was one of the others, an outsider. That was how distant we had become. And now I'm not even sure if my brother's dead or alive. Michal too I failed. As much as I loved her, I was powerless to help as my child dragged life out of her. She'd looked at me that day, too weary to speak, with eyes that begged me to help her, to hold her and keep her on this earth, the place of the living. I couldn't. I had to turn away. When I'd looked again, her face was locked in that same, bitter surrendered stare that Jesus wore at Gethsemane. I'd failed them both. They were bracing to meet their

separate challenges alone, deserted.

I sit against the wall. The rough stone tears my sores. I press harder, wrestling with the pain, loving it. I am *Kepha*—"the rock," the rock which collapsed under all who trusted it enough to stand on it. I laugh and cry. The pain of bleeding wounds is slim punishment for my crimes.

I saw Jesus only once after the crucifixion. There are stories of other appearances. They may or may not be true. But I saw him only once. I was in Galilee, fishing every day. The hard work was all that kept me from throwing myself off a cliff. I didn't give myself time to think about either Jesus' failure or my own. I'd often work all night. The other disciples, except Judas, were in Galilee with me. They stayed at my house or with the Zebedee brothers like before. They'd take turns helping me in the boat, but none tried to match my pace. They thought I'd caught a demon. Perhaps I had.

We'd fished all night. It was morning and there was nothing in the nets. A man stood on shore watching. I hadn't seen where he came from. He yelled and pointed to a place a short distance east. I never liked advice from shore, but the man seemed sure. We gave it a try. On the first cast, we netted more fish than we could get in the boat. Then I knew—the voice and the gesture of the man on shore: it was Jesus. He'd claimed he'd meet us in Galilee. He'd kept his promise. I jumped into the water and swam to shore. My toes felt the bottom and I ran to Jesus. It was he. His face was changed some—older, slightly wrinkled—but everything else was the same. I went to embrace him. He waved me off with his arm. He asked me if I loved him. I said of course. Love for him was all I felt at that moment. He asked a second time—did I love him? I recalled the three denials and shrank back. I said yes I loved him but couldn't meet his eyes. Then he asked again. The question cut me like a scaling blade, summoning every failure of my life, every inadequacy and stupidity and cowardice. I wished I'd drowned that time with Andrew. I wished I'd drowned a hundred times. I muttered an answer—yes, I did love him. It was true. But my love seemed worthless in the face of all my failures. I didn't look up. I couldn't. I turned and walked toward the water, not knowing where I was going and not caring that I didn't know. Jesus grabbed my shoulder. He turned me to face him and kissed me. Then he said to come eat breakfast. He had a fire ready and some bread. The others had landed and came running. John the son of Zebedee brought me my shirt. I hadn't realized I was naked. I put my shirt on and followed the others and had some breakfast.

I remember Jesus' face from Gethsemane, but I remember his voice asking me three times if I loved him. Those questions are the core of my guilt, a guilt that is always there, worst in darkness like this prison. I'll forget sometimes, then Jesus' voice will be asking again, cutting away my excuses and leaving me alone with the ghosts of my failures.

I stand. I walk as far as the chain will allow. In all my times of recalling the three questions, not till tonight have I thought the incident through to its conclusion. I always stopped after the third question, the pit of my self-loathing. I refused to go any further; I enjoyed my guilt. But tonight I went beyond that pause and pushed

through to the end, the kiss. *He kissed me.* Jesus gave me signs throughout our friendship. Some I understood; others I didn't. But this last, the one that would've spared me decades of torment, I missed completely. I refused even to remember it. Till tonight. In the three questions, Jesus exposed my failures. In the kiss, he forgave them.

It's his last and greatest gift to me, finally accepted in this Roman prison thirty years later on the eve of my execution. Relief and calm flow over me like a gentle wave of warm soothing water. Maybe now I can get some rest before dawn. Maybe even some sleep.

The boy wakes me from a vivid dream. He's standing near with two bowls and his lantern. I smile and ask if the sun's up. He says yes, just now. It's a fine morning. I nod. I'm glad it's a good day. He offers me the bowl of food, but I refuse. I want my stomach empty. He understands. I ask him what's in the other bowl. He says water. I tell him I'm not thirsty either. He says it's not to drink, then shyly asks if I'll baptize him. He tells how he went before dawn and got the water from a spring outside the city, the purest spring he knows of. He hopes it'll suffice. I'm overwhelmed by his faith and can barely get the words out—yes, of course I'll baptize him; the water's fine. I recall the dirty water of the Jordan and laugh. I tell him his water's even better than Jesus got. He says then it's good enough for him. I stand and perform the brief rite and wet his hair. We kneel together and I teach him how to pray, just as Jesus taught me in the dark room by the oil press. In the long moments of our kneeling silence, I find the strength that'll carry me through the day and on into whatever comes after. Finished, we stand. The boy thanks me. I accept his thanks and return in kind. He'll never know how much he's helped me.

He puts the bowls aside and says we must go. I ask him to wait, then tell him last night's dream. Rome was in flames and I was fleeing. It was night, but the whole countryside was lit in an orange glow. Many people ran past, all away from the city. Their shadows faded into the night. But one man, his face hidden in a cloak, was going toward the city, walking with strong, determined strides. I stopped him and pointed at the flames. I tried to drag him with me toward safety. He wouldn't budge. In the scuffle, his cloak fell back and revealed his face. It was Jesus. He was going to Rome to be with his people in the coming crisis. I stopped tugging and wept at his feet. He lifted me and faced me toward the city. We walked together toward the flames in the burning hot night.

The boy is amazed and asks what the dream means. I tell him it means simply this—I came back. Tell anyone who asks that Simon Barjona was fleeing but chose to turn around and come back. The boy says he'll tell it. He says he'll tell everyone.

There's noise upstairs and we must go. The boy unlocks the shackle and leads me up the stairs. I go willingly.

Notes on Contributors

Thomas Adair's contribution is a group of excerpts from *Slowly Toward Sleep*, his novel in progress.

Jeffrey Anderson studied two years at Yale, spent three years in Boston, and is a recent graduate of Duke. He has studied with Reynolds Price.

Mary Ann Blatt is an aspiring photographer.

Cynthia Camlin has just returned from study in France, and is currently working on a manuscript of poems.

Chris Caryl would like to believe that he is from Midland, Texas.

Joann Diverdi is a documentary photographer from Massachusetts. She is currently living in the Durham area, and working with Ruth Robertson on a book about eastern North Carolina women.

Karen Dubilier spent the past two summers on Duke's program in Israel. The first half of the program is spent in Jerusalem and the second half on an archaeological excavation in the Upper Galilee. Her photograph, *Bedouin Man*, was taken along the Gulf of Aqaba which runs directly into the Red Sea. Across the gulf are the mountains of Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

David Dubow is a senior CPS major who wishes to go to medical school in two years. His hobbies are backpacking, photography, and ambulance work. He is from Westport, Connecticut.

Kitty Harmon is a senior Comparative Literature major from New Hampshire.

Carole Harris is a sophomore studying French and history.

Julie Hofmann is a senior English major, just returned from a year's study in England and Italy.

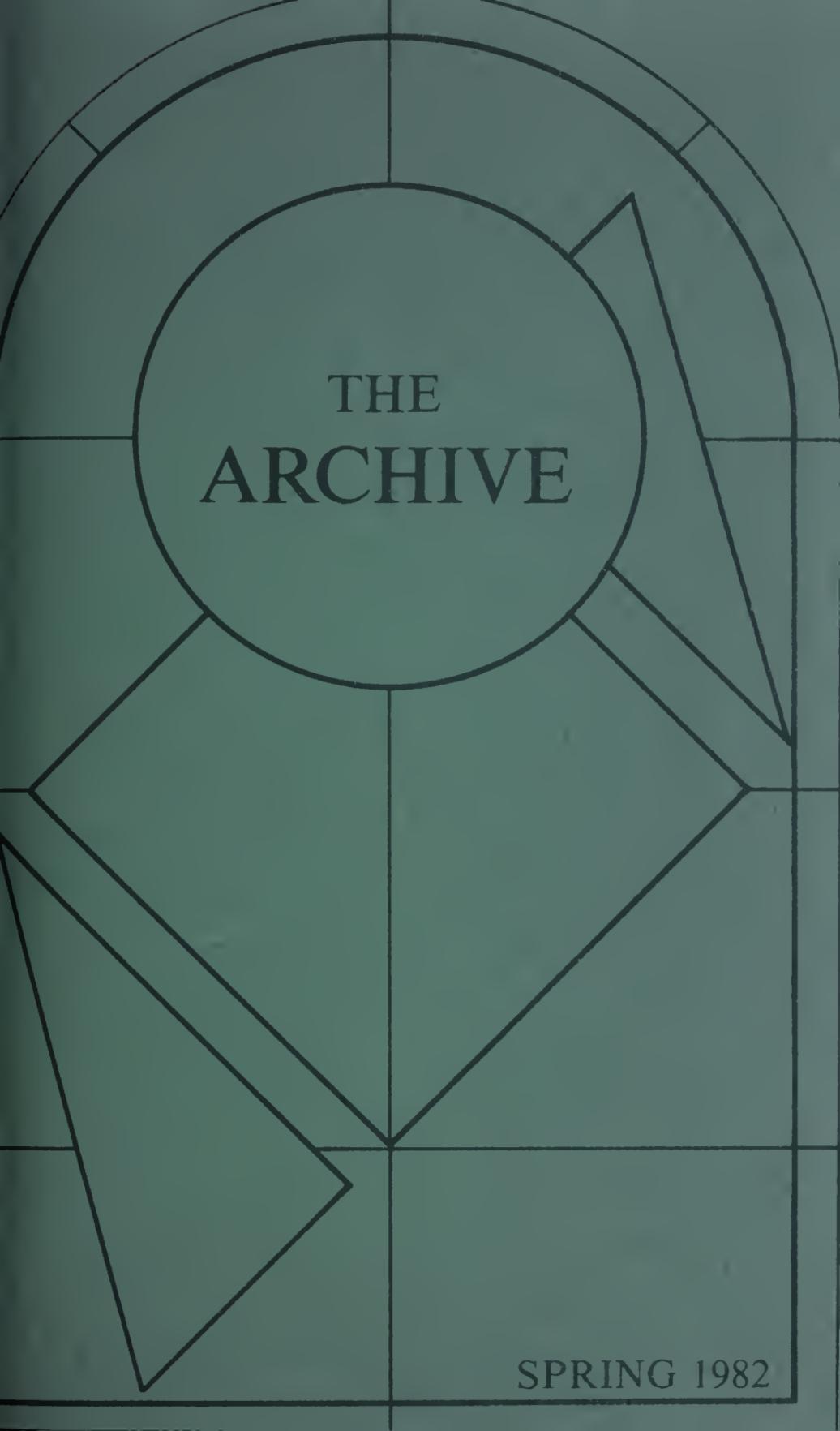
Raisin Horn works in the cataloging department in Perkins Library, and has an M.A. in creative writing from Hollins College.

Donna Jackson is a Trinity senior, studying English and photography. She is a Kappa Kappa Gamma who submitted nonetheless.

Kevin Nance is a Benenson Prize recipient currently working on a novel.

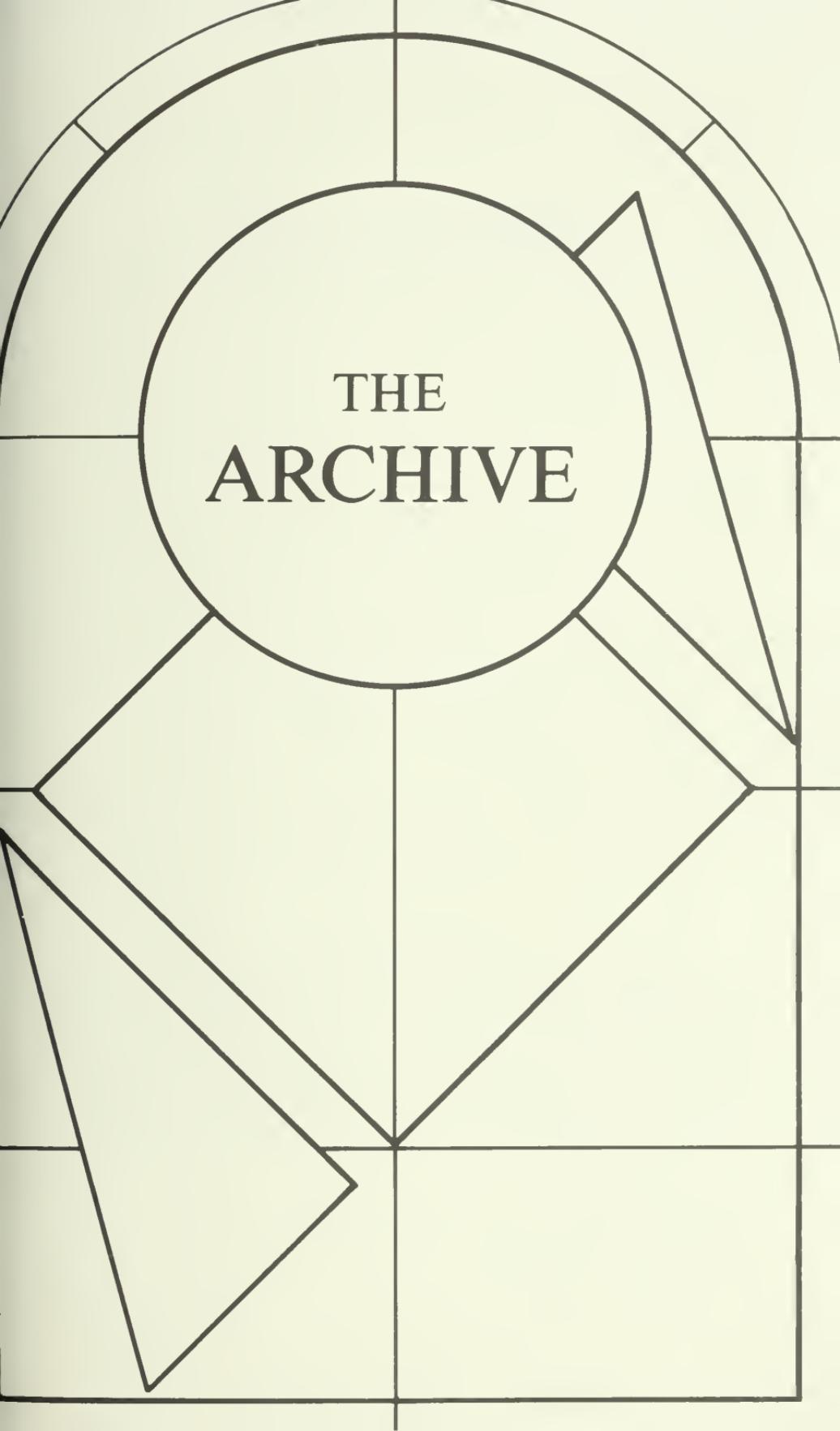
Kim Still is a senior English major, anticipating a career in publishing.

George Witte is an English major.

A stylized geometric design in a muted teal color. It features a central circle containing the title. Radiating from the bottom of the circle are several large, angular shapes that resemble stylized rays or architectural elements. The entire design is set against a background of thin, intersecting vertical and horizontal lines.

THE
ARCHIVE

SPRING 1982

A geometric design featuring a central circle containing the text "THE ARCHIVE". This circle is surrounded by a larger circle, and the space between them is divided into segments by radial lines. Some of these segments are further divided by diagonal lines, creating a complex, star-like pattern. The entire design is set against a light background with a grid of thin lines.

THE
ARCHIVE

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The Double Helix

Let me exaggerate when I speak of you:
you are my mythology,
deciphered in a leapsecond
as your contour emerged from some prehistory not mine.

You grew to me like some important beast
painted in the cave of my being—
pre-heraldic, but signifying
all the flesh it was necessary to record.

In the beautiful night
I calibrated the span of your back
and wept to find a linden leaf.

If only I could immortalize you
as you mortalize me.

One Thousand Islands

The little islands staccato the river
and are pitiful
like cat footprints
across a blue-gray blotter.
They are dwarfed by opalesque cloudbanks
parachuting from the unbordered sky,
hovering over them like baker's hats—
halfway between hilarity and dignity.

It is not they but the water that is important.
The rats know this as they hurry down to the docks.
Old houses involute and new ones assume anonymous postures
in the hope of aborting ghosts to come
whose forgotten names
will be bellowed from the ferry boats.

The swallows taunt whatever trees
push up between the rocks.

The little islands lock-step
as the river nibbles their eternities.

Pond Fishing

If she had had a choice, she would have been a crane, or an otter or one of the dragonflies. In those cases she could have been closer to the water, closer to the pond. She could have waded in its shallows, slid down its banks, danced among its reeds. As it was she was a girl and for a few years she could fish.

It never mattered that she only used worms and cane poles, that she only caught catfish, that she stole time away from her family responsibilities. The important thing was coming down the hill through the cedars and seeing the calm flat surface of the pond and hearing the quiet of the pastures. The cows would come and go, belling their quiet steps through the marsh and back up the slopes into the trees. Sometimes, she would see ducks or shitepokes but usually there were only the dragonflies, zipping past in Chinese blues and greens. But none of this was necessary either; she had come to sit on the dam in the bleakest weather, when the meadow was lifeless gray and beige, full of the broken stalks of the last season's grass. She had sat full-faced into the wind and watched the pond ripple toward her from the marsh while her hair blew straight back past her ears. She had learned the moods of the water, she knew its levels, and the trees brushing its surface. She had come there since she was very young.

She had begun to come as soon as she was old enough to be entrusted to the men for the afternoon. They would come down, the fathers observing, the boys fishing; she had everything done for her, the hook baited, the line cast, the fish removed, the hook baited again. She never forgot the insult of finally being ordered to bait her own hook. It had never been laziness on her part that let them do these things for her, it had simply been that this was the way things were, it had never occurred to her that it might be a nuisance for her father. He had said, "Just thread the ole worm on, run the hook up in him like this"—and when she did, the worm burst and bled brownness and blood onto her hand and the lower part not yet run through lashed against her fingers. After that she pinched the worms in half before she used them; they died while her back was turned.

After years she began to go alone, began to know the process as her own. The poles and the three-pronged pitchfork were in the smokehouse, the plastic buckets were in the feedroom. The worms were always hard to find in the dryness of summer; they would be under the heavy granite rocks in the cow lane or down in the

drainage ditch that caught the run off from the cement barn lot. Wherever the moisture was right she would find them, their gray-pink bodies twisting through the earth. The three-pronged pitchfork was light and she could turn over bucket-sized clods of rich earth, crumbling it to find the worms wriggling away. When the bucket was full enough, she'd go back to the smokehouse, find the cane poles, sometimes the rod-and-reel and fix the tackle—restraining the pole, add more weights, change the hook size. She'd put the poles over one shoulder and carry the worms in the other hand, and move off down the lane.

She was fifteen. She had been bad with her body as long as she could remember. She was nearsighted and slightly overweight, but mostly it was her fear that made her stumble or walk with the tenseness of self-consciousness. Team sports were her greatest horror, being picked last for any team a constant humiliation. Fishing was different. Moving down the lane, she could imagine herself in the *Jungle Books*, wolf-losing across the fields. She was by herself, it was something she could do alone. She could work with her hands, she could be outside, she could find food, all without being watched. She could be ingenious in how she set the tackle, what she baited with, where she cast. There wasn't much choice in what she caught; the pond was dying and most of the fish were small, sunfish or catfish. The big bass were gone, fished out or dead from the mud and weed growth. All that didn't matter, though, when the bobber dipped, vanished, under the brown water and she knew that something had taken the bait. What it was didn't matter, she had come there and she had caused this to be and for that moment it could be anything, a turtle, a bass, a perch, and then when she swung it out if it were a catfish, well, no loss. One less catfish in the pond.

She came to the place all through high school. As her sisters and brothers and cousins aged they followed her to the pond; she became the baiter of hooks, the remover of fish. She enjoyed the tall tales that came out of it—the story of snagging the turtle in the tail, the day that the fish got stuck in the tree and the pole got pulled out into the pond by another fish, the day they caught thirty-seven tiny catfish. But the privacy was gone and the approval had changed; now it was permissible for her to go with the others as their helper but it was no longer acceptable to go on her own. To go alone was selfish. But she had begun to understand that she was supposed to understand the world as a woman now, or at least in an increasingly womanly way. So she accepted the limitations without protest or even thought, except to mourn in a quiet passing way. She went on, treading the thinning path between selfishness and disappearance; she found acceptable space in mothering her cousins and siblings in their adventures. Her anger built unknown to her and when she laughed at her tall tales the edge of pain was never far away.

After she left home, she could return to the pond more freely, because she was seldom at home when other relatives were visiting; and because she was now a guest of sorts, she had less responsibilities than when she had lived at home. There was little fishing to be done, though, because the pond had filled in with cows trampling down its sides and swimming to stand in the middle during August heat. The dying

pond was rich with time; the reeds supported muskrats and frogs, redwinged blackbirds and horseflies. The shallows crawled with life, the larvae of insects, minnows, tadpoles. The wind and stillness were the same, the green drainage strip still wandered to the creek. Brown cow pats littered the hard clay dam, the big sweet gums gnarled with the same twists.

She was home the weekend they drained the pond. Her father came to her grandparents with the CAT bulldozer and lumbered through the pasture. The dozer left gashes behind, wide brown slabs of dirt where the grass and flowers had been kicked aside. Two rows came in pairs down the slope. The dozer sat below the dam with her father. The other men and she stood above watching. They had all come down together, herself, her brother, her grandfather, her uncle. As the dozer began to bite into the dam she fidgeted, nervous for no reason. Her grandfather waited, still in the spring air, hands in his pockets. He had waited years to have this done, his patience was smoke in the air, rising gently on one level. Her brother watched the machine with a mechanic's love. The dozer took down the persimmon trees where the fish had been stuck years before. Her father grinned up at her from underneath his cap; the trees were out of the way of the trench he was digging to the water, he could have left them standing. Bitterness at such teasing clogged her throat for a time, then the trench opened and the pond began to slip its brown water smoothly over the clay girdle and down into the leafless wood. She watched as the fish slipped by, their shining sides flashing against the yellow earth. The level dropped minute by minute, the reeds lost their buoyancy, the algae plastered against the mud. Fish were stranded on the flat near the marsh, their flopping desperation echoed against the pastures. Her uncle returned to the house and brought back the air rifle. He began target practice on the larger fish, declaring now and then—"See, see he moved, damn if I didn't hit him." During the week he was a young executive, but on that day he was unshaven and wore a red t-shirt that said—*Eat more crayfish, live longer. Eat more oysters, love longer. Billy Budd's Restaurant, Atlanta, Georgia.*

She looked at the persimmons, pushed into the creek, surrounded by the clear brown water and chunks of clay and watched the fish jerking on the mud flat and wondered why she had come to see such a thing. Walking back to the house she was pleased with the overcast day, pleased that there was not a bright capping sky on a day of such tiresome meanness. Leaving to drive to her parents' house later, there was a swatch of water across the road a mile from the pond; it had dropped yellow mud and gravel on the blue highway. She smiled and drove on.

Through the summer the cup of land that was the pond parched. The last water dried out of it, the earth cracked and split in great slabs and lay, octagon pancakes, on top of other cracking slabs. Her father and grandfather dug out the dry dirt bottom, down to the hard gravel again. They heaped the dirt in the pasture where it rose over the grass and the young calves played over its ridges. When she came home next, they had reworked the dam and built a pier out into the deeper part of the pond. The water began to fill in again. Once she had made her mark away from

home she had more freedom within the family and, after the women had washed up the dinner dishes, she would walk down to check the level of the new pond. It became a transformation of the old ritual, coming down through the cedars to the raw new banks instead of the old mossy posts and gray rock. She hoped that reeds would grow back after the water rose. For almost a year the water filled in. The fall, winter, and spring rains brought it up and her grandfather stocked the pond with bass and hybrid catfish and bream.

The next fall, she came down again to fish. She was twenty-one. She was no longer unsure of her body. She had passed being afraid of her intelligence and was moving to find her own life. She spent her time at home in quietness, watching the aging of the family, sorting the old angers, the new, shelling lima beans with her mother.

The day she came down to fish, she wore a white cotton shirt that her father had worn in his youth, blue jeans and tennis shoes. The September air was warm and her hair smiled red glints into the palm of the afternoon. In the feel of her arms inside the cotton, her thighs against the denim, she knew her own strength. She was pleased with the day before it began, to be there; fishing was enough. Her shirt had dirt and worm mud on it, the day had heated through the back with her sweat. She caught the first fish, a decent-sized bream, which she threw back. Others were there of course, but they had long since learned to thread worms and to remove the slippery fish. For a time they all caught bream. After each catch, the words would echo across the water and be swallowed into the woods beyond—"What'd you get?" "Bream." "How big?" "Like this," the words followed by the fisher's gesture of size. When she caught the first bass, it was much made over, being the first of its class to be seen since the pond had been restocked in the spring. And then she caught the spotted cat, its pound and a half body pulling the cane pole almost double as the silver-bodied fish thrashed and bounced among the weeds. She took it off the hook and carried it by the tail to her grandfather on the pier. As she lifted it, blood ran onto her hands and splattered on the pier and her pants. They left the fish in the grass for a while before her grandfather decided to throw it back. He walked it over to show to her father explaining that he had only put 12 spotted cats in the pond and that they should get to be ten pounds each. She agreed, convinced that the fish would die anyway, but willing to argue only so long. The men laid the fish in the grassy shallow where it wallowed, not moving well, for moments. They called her brother around to reach out and grab the fish because they too now thought it would die. Instead, he grabbed the fish and flung it toward the middle of the pond, where it swam away to live or to die later on the mud bottom.

The woman sighed and rebaited her hook. She sat with the hook in the water, her legs dangling from the pier and thought of her brother: so confident in his body and mind, intent enough to do what he thought should be done instead of listening so carefully for what was right to do. She thought of her grandfather, knowing how many catfish were in his pond and her father who could afford to push over trees because he had a son who loved machines. The pond waited around her like a

woman tamed. The reeds had disappeared, there was no algae, no cow pats on the dam. The low Bermuda grass grew out into the water for three feet waving through the underwater where the mower couldn't reach. The banks, otherwise, were neat; the outline, an egg shape, utterly placid. She thought of her early dreams of making love under the cedars in the long grass. Rain fell across the dream; she smelled her own warm skin in the damp. A jerk on her hook brought her back to the day, the glaring heat, her sweat. Pulling the fish in, she looked at its skin, the thin delicate pinks and greens around the gills, the muted yellow of the fins. Sunfish indeed. She flipped the little fish flashing into the weedy shallows; with one desperate lunge it was gone.

She sprang up and walked off to the marsh to look for the minnows, the strange grasses, the dragonflies. The marsh was dry, six-inch channels dug through its soggy earth. It was damp enough for frogs to hop in, but the wriggling pools were empty, their basins sprouting grass. She waited, listening for the voice of the pond, and finally knew that there no longer was a voice, that the singing grasses were stilled. Only an occasional dragonfly zipped by, rare and lost in the clipped wasteland. The woman watched a pair flying, mated together, searching for a resting place. They settled at last on the ground. She wondered if the female would find a place for her eggs once they broke apart. The tiny flies were the only ones she saw; the big ones with bright green bodies as thick as a finger, the ones with white and black glazed wings were gone.

Looking down the length of the pond she saw the youngest grandchild dancing with excitement on the pier, her red hair shining in the afternoon. The woman's brother waded out in the grassy edge to snag the plastic can of worms floating away on the wind ripples. Across the water her father settled in his chair in the shade of the sweetgum. Hearing a voice she looked up to see her sister winding down the path through the cedars. At sixteen, she moved gracefully, her womanliness developing easily. She had never known the pond in its wildness, she accepted its tameness as her parents accepted her grace, her achievements in the areas they approved. But with each other the sisters were more subtle in their support. The woman rose up from watching the dragonflies and walked back through the sedate grass to where her sister stood watching. They talked together, laughing at their brother's antics and their father's contentment. Her sister left first, going ahead of her to the gate. The woman followed slowly, knowing that what there had been of herself in this place was gone, now that the fish were numbered, the marsh dry, the grass clipped. Before leaving she waded the creek to touch the skeleton of the persimmon trees lightly and briefly with the open palm of her hand. She splashed back through the water and moved up the slope, choosing another maturity, to where her sister stood, hand on the gate, waiting for her, to leave the quiet field together.

Raisin Horn

In the Farmhouse

for Carolyn and Henry Doering

In the farmhouse a mother looks up
from her tasks at the table.
Though for years she has wiped clean
the places where her children

filled themselves with bread,
only now she sees how her fingers
have paled against the fiery stone
in the ring worn since her wedding day.

Up the long path from the field
her husband comes, arms laden with firewood
and eyes bluer than the sea. Next to him,
before sleep, she remembers once she was asked

were he the gardener? Soon, given to her dreaming,
a child cries out in the night. She is afraid to
awaken completely, afraid to leave her bed
lest her footsteps carry her down the hall

into a room where a thin curtain waves
in the cold air from an opened window,
but the bed is empty.
There are no children here now.

In the mornings as she brews tea
and stirs the oatmeal, she is serene
in her hushed kitchen into which pours
golden light. Toward noon she rests

on the porch, facing the birch and the cherry,
books in her lap. It is nearly time
to go inside, flour the breadboard,
lay down the china plates one by one.

Harvest of the First Child

She waits, looking out over the lushness
of the wheatfields that once promised
to be light and wild, and now yield
only the tamed repetition of dusk hanging
still and warm in the curtains.

Night crouches in the wheat—is drawn
into the bedroom window—the sound of crickets
falling heavy on her like the beat of hot air
that has pressed all summer on these acres.

A coolness in the darkness coming
sweeps the muslin onto her shoulder,
sweetens the taste of the field to her lips—
enticement that plays with her—taunts her skin,
stirs the scent of having sat with limbs
too close together, too long and too hot.

She waits for the touch of a hand
but asks no man to comfort her now,
as her belly lies heavy on her legs,
as the child shifts inside to the movement
of long strands of wheat dancing.

Her hands, hanging listless through the window,
crave reacquaintance with the night.
The breezes accuse her, laugh at her, rooted here,
while no man sights the triumph
in the waving of the wheat, no man hears
the rhythmic beating of her body ripening.

She has waited for response in their eyes,

felt the longing on her spine, since before
the first human hand touched her skin,
before she felt the warm breath of birth.

And here, she has felt the vacant life wrap her,
swell and grow cumbersome, moving
to claim any child she brings into this hollow trap.
She submits to the solitude, the design of desperation
passed from daughter to daughter.
The wheatfields sing, all the louder.

And outside, not even the whistling of wind
lifting heat from the wheatfields
can cover the voices of men gathering below her,
going forth in the name of harvest,
into the blue rings of moonlight,
to thrash down the singing wheat.

Return to the River House

His winged laughter still rises
in these clean, white hallways, on the windows,
the blue-white circles reflected
from the tide washing up below.
She falters over the floorboards like a toddler,
turns delicately towards the photograph
that she took that last summer.

The portrait, the man, her father,
is there in the frame where the kodacolor
of his yellow slicker in the sun
lives longer than the tan of his body,
remains here after his eyes
have long paled against white sheets.

He looks out from the deck and sails
of the boat, laughing out at her
as she searches for steady footing,
for the perfect camera angle.

She caught him then, turning his face
to her, to her mother, his eyes closed,
his lips meeting the breeze that came
to caress him from the mouth of the river.
Like foil in the sun, his gaze
is too bright, too obsolete, too untouchable.
Was it his voice that had said,

*All this, it is nothing much to lose,
we return to the tide, we rest...*

The girl turns and pulls the shade

across the blue veil of dust on the window.
The memories, the photograph, the words
cannot be sorted, and the confusion
warns of a thousand tiny deaths.
Bits of herself, their life, too brittle
to stand the racing of the wind, her mind.

This pity, the grief for clarity fading,
is for the voices of his spirit dying,
lost to the bends of the river's deceit.
She brings the portrait gently down. Her mother,
who walks these halls, will want rest now.

Circle into Fire

I

We held a silk circle
between us, believing
we could blow dust from it,
bring it to rest at our feet
and see our heritage, footprinted
by a thousand women,
Isis and Siva all before us.
We knew we would turn with them
smooth and clear, polishing
the coming days, finely
muting them into our reflection,
being all—wife and teacher,
mother and writer. Bless us,
our way or not at all.
I swore to you, soul, friend,
protected as we were
in the warm yellow, the glow
of your room or mine,
we would endure
never out of meanings,
never far from a collective past,
a collectable future.

II

But too far ahead now.
Back to the wine in our hands,
the picnics on rag rugs,
knives spreading soft cheese
on bread the way we spread

our lives on one another.
We would keep love—weave images—
feed them like new strands
into the cloth. We would never
stop the spinning between us
nor meander too far.

III

Yet our age, our fear
of drudging passages
in common approaches, made us
breathe hot and cloudy
in that room, closing us
inside the cold window glass,
while outside the wet night
gathered. We looked
through hopes as if through fog
resting on the pane,
never trying to smear
or clean too wide a circle
with our fingers.
We said we would be content,
that one man would understand
our uneasy tottering,
though none had,
and there were many.
We spoke, we listened on and on,
like a sister, like a mother would,
our voices cracking
as if the cold was creeping in.

IV

Now, we hold these conversations
behind that glass,

within that room,
sealing the hot faith between us.
The flame is rising
in our paper lanterns,
and our lips are praying
the wind won't rock us,
too hard or too soon.
Our hands, our bodies,
circle faster and faster
within these panes
we call storm windows.
We careen, separated from night,
about to be dashed through the glass
like a burning sphere,
into a darkness so wet,
it changes even the color
of fire to nothing.

Retention

He suspected that it was all a case of being honest with himself, and that if he just let go, the needed self-honesty would come. This thought came out of the difficulty that he was having as he wrote to his brother. He had spent so much time thinking of what to say, and now, despite all of his plans for succinct acknowledgement of the current situation, he was left with awkward sentences whose imports were all tangential to one another. He understood why, of course, but this only added to his lack of control of his writing. This was because the situation that he had intended to describe was of a deeper nature than he allowed himself to feel, and so manifested itself in sentences whose terse brutality reminded him that they were only symptoms of a larger problem.

He continued to write. *What concerns me is . . .* It was wrong to say that. Why say *concerns* when the situation demands more than the definition of the word can offer? In fact, he thought, and not for the first time, that all words would be weak or useless. He found it amazing that words, which are designed to label the feelings we experience and thus connect us to other people, were proving to have a finite ability to assume responsibility for the full conveyance of those feelings. It was as if someone were trying to impart a feeling for the size of the human population by saying that there are four billion people on earth: one can understand the concept of the number, but *feeling* it cannot be achieved—that requires the hit and miss arrow of imagination. What made matters worse was that both he and his brother understood well what had happened to their mother—they just couldn't explain it to each other. It was like the time when their first dog had been killed when it was hit by a truck: their emotions immediately internalized, unable to find words, and so they dealt with their sorrows in separate solitudes. The most ever said about the event were awkward little sentences like "She was a good dog," and "I don't think anyone could have had a better dog than her." Still, he forged on; he had to—honesty would demand it.

But the closer he got in touch, the more the feeling overpowered him. He felt tense and ineffectual. He envisioned himself held on either end by huge god-like hands and being snapped like a pencil. He heard the creaking of wood forced to give up its natural structure, then saw the hands each with a separate piece of himself. With this vision he realized he must be getting closer to the truth; he was

feeling the unexplainable again, and that always meant something profound. He thought that he would speak of her condition; it would be tough. He took his attention off the letter and peeled away another fingernail. It pulled too close to the side as he made the final tug with his teeth and, in order to avoid exposing the quick, he had to bite off the opaque white sliver. This left a jagged stub too small to bite any further but large enough, he knew, to catch on the draperies when next he would close them. Spitting out the nail fragment, he returned to defining her condition. *How is she?* he thought rhetorically, already knowing the answer, enjoying the absurdity. *She is good to fair*, he began to write, but stopped. Salty water had come unannounced and hung over the lenses of his eyes as he held his head down over the paper. He knew that soon a tear would drop onto the paper and leave a water mark that he had always associated with the wartime letters of a mistress to her lover. He moved the paper and wiped his eyes. But as suddenly as the tears had come he felt his chin and lower lip tighten, puckering into an expression that he knew would demand further tears. He tried to straighten out his face but couldn't, seeing how a force greater than his usual self was controlling it. Holding his hand to his forehead he let a few tears drop noiselessly onto the table. He noticed that he had been tightening his lips in order to hold back a greater breath, a moan that his body longed to utter. He fought. Soon his lips gave way and released a packet of repressed air—short, hot, painful. He knew he should give in, but wouldn't. He felt that he should look like everyone else in the world—content, peaceful, regular. He would have to put on his face of reinforced iron reserved for these occasions.

What exactly had set him off? He was searching for a word to describe her condition. He had been hoping to be honest and choose the best word possible, but a wave of feeling forced him to choose a euphemism. He had wanted truth, and wanted it still. To find it he had given free reign to his associative mind. The events that had led to the choice of the wrong word were like this: *My brother already knows the situation so I don't need to be graphic. I'll just select a mutual euphemism—something that we can both pick up on yet not have to admit relating to.* His mind offered: *O.K., so-so, feeling a little blue, good to fair . . . Hey, that last one sounds promising—meaningless enough—but still there should be something better.* His brain reminded him of the seriousness of the matter, that he would have to be realistic and honest. Something inside him suggested a further set of words: *Realistic, sub-heading: honest*, but he couldn't follow it in that manner because the words that came to mind all lacked power. What he literally felt was, *the shock of life cheating you, why me, why her, something about loss—loss of all faculties of reason—altered consciousness, hugs I won't have again, anger at nothing and everything, the description of brain functions with a page missing, the vision of an EKG making a straight line . . .* And then came the stream of thought that, in all its repulsiveness, bundled itself into one mental word—a word too frank, too true to admit. A word in his mind like, *misdirected thoughts, handicapped, wilted brainstem, vegetable.*

II

Hunger. He hadn't been paying it much attention while writing, but now he did. He went into the kitchen—it seemed so odd without his wife—and thought to make something to eat. The sink was filled with crusty dishes, some half-submerged in reddish oily water (the spaghetti sauce he'd had two days ago) and the others high and dry like stacks of rounded bones representing a creature that once flew. He grabbed a few cookies out of a package and thought of Brian when he was little. He used to scramble to the top of the refrigerator and dole out cookies to his baseball buddies as if he were in a scene from *Oliver*. *Food, glorious food*. On the freezer door was a magnetic note holder that read "Mom's mood is," to which was attached another reversible magnet that read "good" or "bad" on the two sides. It reminded him of his earlier thought *Good to fair* and produced a pain inside, a small knife, a hidden stiletto just under the ribs. Hunger spoke again. His answer was to put these events out of his mind and go out to get something to eat.

Staring at the swirling patterns made by the cream as he poured it into his coffee, it occurred to him that he didn't remember driving to the restaurant. It wasn't that he had erased it—though it had been one of her favorite spots—but that he was numb to inconsequentials. It was as if his consciousness had gone off on some other more important matter and had allowed the subconscious to take the helm. He was under cruise control. This didn't bother him greatly—it had happened before the accident, but he had always thought of himself as a man who had full control of his life; it was events like these that reminded him otherwise. "Would you like your salad now or later?" The waitress. He unfolded from his reverie. "Ah, yes, I mean, no: no, I don't think so. I don't want a salad."

There—that was another thing: no lucidity of thought or speech. It seemed so odd to him because he had been the best man on his debate team in college. It occurred to him to create a new definition for the word *forensics* that would encompass his present situation. *Forensics: the study and proper use of methods of thought conveyance whose logical premises and conclusions work only for those not subject to pressure*. This definition brought about a mild, very mild, pleasure: he still had some of his humor left. *Thank God*, he thought, *because a man without humor is . . .* He couldn't complete the maxim. He tried again: *A man without humor is . . . is . . . honest. Damn. Another definition*. Lately he'd been having quite a few.

The steam from the meat and gravy rose under his face; it felt warm on his eyelids and tantalized him more than he had expected it would. He half granted a laugh with the observation that, no matter how pressured we may be, we always take time out to eat. He had noticed this in his life but had never offered the observation to others; it seemed too odd, too personal. Every time an event had gone wrong, or when he was depressed or angry, it seemed funny to him, almost comical, that the world was so constant, while people, not really fitting into the world, were an ever-volatile lot. He remembered when he and his wife had the argument about whether to place his mother in a nursing home or have her stay with them. The debate was heated and he was losing—but that was because he was allowing himself to be

emotional. She took out her anger on the dishes, scrubbing them vigorously. He looked out the window and saw the irrationality of the whole situation: the world, which had produced so much feeling in him, was perfectly indifferent to the hailing of emotion going on inside his home. There the day was, sunny and brilliant like a million days on the lake combined into one—the wind blew, the ground was soft from rains, the hedges needed trimming again. He thought how crazy it all seemed. *After all, he thought, tomorrow I will still have to go to work, the kids will still have to be taken to school, the paper still brought in . . . on and on ad infinitum. Nothing stops or changes our anger; we function in our set patterns, and problems, when they do arise, are simply absorbed into routine if they remain unsolved.*

A sip of coffee and another bite of meat. *Why do they put parsley on your plate?* he thought. *No one I know eats it.* But he loved carrots. “Carrots are good for your eyes,” he told his children. They seemed like small orange eyes, soft and sweet. He remembered how hard it had been to get Karen to eat them. He played train, airplane, hid them under spoonfulls of mashed potato, even ate them himself to prove that they really weren’t so bad. She would just gurgle in response and push them out of her mouth and onto her face and tray. *God, she was adorable.* He saw her Dresden china skin, braces and red hair, carrot red. Suddenly all he knew was how much he missed her. There was something about a daughter, the making of someone more perfect than yourself who would love you as much as you loved her. His hand held the fork tighter. He longed to hold her and yet he wasn’t sure when he would see her again. Then out of the visions came a newer, more profound one: he wanted someone to hold who would also hold him. His fist tightened around the fork even more. His hands were hungry too.

III

He was driving across the country with a speed that expressed his desire. His body drove, his mind watched. The state he was in was like a trance: his mind was frantically absorbing every available detail as if it were a stimulant that could keep him awake and in control. His mind was saying a prayer to the higher reason in himself. What it spoke was as disconnected in thought as the letter he had tried to write earlier in the day: once again it seemed as if he were trying to connect with a more important theme, some source of inner still water, and yet it could only produce a descant that was tangential to, but not supported by, the main theme. It was as if he knew the outcome of the play but not the script; this he filled in as he drove: *Moving. Moving keeps me whole. The more I move the more I feel that I can escape. Escape from what? The past. But what in the past?* His mind paused; there was the hum of electricity. *You can’t be leaving the present due to misgivings in the past. True, but only in part, because you can’t function as a whole man when so many parts of you have been left in the past. For example, when my dog died. That was a painful experience but I continued to move on. In fact, when anything like that has happened I have simply grinned and borne it. A sharp pain: that was something Mom used to say.* There was another pause. His mind had recessed and

seemed to be collating. He knew he was searching for the counterpart to this discourse and went deep into his mind where there were worlds of blue and black. The answer found was one to which he had no immediate response: *Yes, but to do all of that grinning and bearing you had to swallow a pretty bitter pill—and you know what too many bitters can do to your system.*

Then it was nature again, playing the same old joke: he saw the fields of green vegetables in neat algebraic rows and realized that relative to them he was moving nowhere. He thought again about the argument he had had with his wife; it was becoming symbolic of a greater event in his life. Then a revelation: *What you see is that the physical world moves nowhere relative to the spiritual. Plants, mountains, people's bodies, all will pass away, but while with us suggest the presence of something greater. The comedy that you have been seeing is the one in which you try to reconcile your problems through the physical world. No, your body is going nowhere, but it is your will, a collective of emotions called the soul, that drives you. Your body has little to do with the release of emotion. Therefore your soul is only using it, as it does in this car, as a means of reaching its destination of release. Your wife has left you for this reason. You have already known this. Each time your hand struck her cheek it was your body trying to solve the problems of the soul. You know that the divorce papers will soon come and that your eyes will read the message to your soul, which in turn will cause that sharp pain under your ribs again. You say you want to hold your daughter or play football with your son again, but what is that other than the spiritual making love visible through your actions? No, you are moving nowhere relative to the world, but your soul takes you to the places that your body will never go.*

His inner voice stopped. It was actually the first time that all had been silent inside. Not because everything had been settled—that was by no means true—but for the first time he found meaning and solace in silence. But irony: the fields, upon closer inspection, were full of feathery, leafy tops that he identified as carrots. His daughter's hair. *Oh God.* He returned his attention to the road, to the car whose limits of safety were being tested by speed, to a soul that kept urging it to attempt the speed of light.

IV

He still shook from his trip, though most of it was due to the fact that he couldn't believe that he was *here*. He had a jittery feeling like a little too much electricity was passing through the nerves so he really wasn't paying attention to what the lady in white was telling him. They were directions, he knew, but he wasn't getting enough information through his system to be clear. He had a good idea anyway; the very fact that he was in this place told him exactly what he was looking for and where he would find it.

He wished he could say that the whole day had been one of those horrific ones in which he had been making irrational love to his mind, but he knew that this was not the case. The scenery around him reminded him that he was very much in the real

world and, in one way or another, would have to deal with it.

This real world woke him up with a smell, a sweet sticky one—more than sweet. And it had an edge. It seemed so familiar, so . . . urine. There were light green walls, like the color of soft, green mold fuzz, and tiles of matching color extending halfway up the walls. He was in a long corridor at the end of which were two doors. The upper halves of the doors were made of huge sheets of irregularly-surfaced glass: with all of their bumps and crevasses they looked like a close-up of very grainy leather. He identified with them too. He felt that the fuzzy images of light that they managed to let through accurately represented the way his eyes had been seeing things throughout his journey here. A short man with wheels glided by. *Wheels? No. Wheelchair.*

He had always hated anything to do with bodies that could no longer function in their proper capacities and had to rely on crutches, canes or other aids. He remembered the fuss he made about not wanting to go through the “purposeless” surgery of having his nose reset after it had been broken in a fight. From then on it was just slightly crooked—but it didn’t bother him.

There was a nurse leading him through a large room filled with many beds, each partitioned from the other by pale blue sheets suspended from runners above. He was lead to one on the left, about three partitions down from the middlemost. He entered and had to redirect his sight downward because what he was looking for was not at eye level. It was in a bed, reclining.

He sat down on a brown wooden chair and marvelled at this wonder of science. The tubes were like small subway systems, some filled with colored fluids, some with clear. There were currently several reservoirs of these fluids suspended from racks above; last time there had not been so many. But then again, last time all of this took place on another floor, one much better than this. He looked at its hands. Bird claws spotted with the paints of age, besmirched with wrinkles. They didn’t move when he touched them. *But of course they wouldn’t.* The tubes disappeared into the arms and nose which suggested that somehow within, these little servants of science were dovetailing with the natural, the organic. *No. This would be hard to describe to anyone, much less my brother.* The letter he had tried to write earlier would have been impossible no matter how extensive his vocabulary, no matter how honest he could have been. He held her hand. It wasn’t cold, but then again it didn’t feel the way that Mother’s used to. Yes, he knew that this was all a matter of getting in touch with himself, and for once he did. He began to moan. A moan, a graphic human howl, one that suggested pains never voiced, words unable to be spoken. Tears were then a matter of course and only served to lubricate his body further for heaving sobs. Doubled over, honest with himself—something he vowed to do from now on—he recalled again the words, or rather the near lack of words that had caused the setting out on this journey. Somehow, in the light of how he felt, they fully applied now. His mind read as it did before: *brain functions with a page missing, misdirected thoughts, handicapped, wilted brainstem, vegetable. Vegetable.*



Kitty Harmon: *Fès*



Joseph Markwordt: *Out of Darkness, into Light*



Joseph Markwordt: *Reflections*



Malcolm MacDougall: *Los Nevados*



Jenny Warburg: *Peace*



Claudia Futter: *Two Sisters, Cuetzalan, Mexico, 1981*



Katherine Whitney: *Emily*, 1981



David Dubow: *Refs, Fall 1981*

When Circles Light

When circles light
and shade stoops over
the magnolia branches
hung like apes or ape arms,

nothing sounds, our ears
are stopped. Crickets and water
are one silence. Far beyond,
the town must be tiptoeing from

porches into lighted rooms,
their movements are so soft.
Moths fly closer, like bees
to the moon. Evening drops

to a field of glowing white, to
the lamps, the tide growing
pools of sea foam, to
aureolas brightening

under the trees. This smoke
is fine, bulging through the town.
The silencer pushes slowly
through the air and mind.

Swimmers Grow Tired

1

The dancing strokes of morning
light shocked
the tips of your hair,
which split and ignited.
I saw the halo.
It was humming
with electrons like bees.
It lit all the colors
at once
in rings where sun
and stars were spinning.

As you awoke,
my lord, I fell into you.
I believed you were a hole
or tunnel,
I lost the warmth of sunlight.

2

When do swimmers grow tired?
The parting of the waves
is above you;
your veils of seafoam fly
inland, the emitted pressure.
It is our understanding
that I must
float, and yet you are
a funnel, an eddy screwing
into

blackness and light,
as when we faint.
You are this pull,
but perhaps you are only
its rim,
and you are pulled.

Bells of San Lorenzo

The dark rim swings.
Bells clang in the sharp blue
midnight of quiet stars and roofs,
cold, orange knuckles that
tighten us to the stone.
The midnight is vast and forever;
windows open and the sky's clamor
blows in on us, shutters beat.

Lean out to the roofs
and you see: a cool rim striking
the darkness, the sudden
metal echo back from anywhere,
the night bowing back endlessly.

Arm of the city, you gather
in steps of baked orange, sweeping
up the weight of earth and bronze.
I am your excuse,
a fixture to look upon itself.
I peer as your eye to the midnight
outside of me and you see. What?
Black blue, blue black.
I see everything;
it is a hole so great I can hear
round tones fall into it
and disappear.

To Cain, Asleep

Though I am the one to be protected,
I shelter you in sleep,
As if one thin woman's arm
Thrown over chest or back
Could keep you from the world.

In sleep, as in love (and in
These two only), you are innocent
And gentle. I have seen your rage—
Farmer's hands clenched
In fists, your voice tight
As wire. I stayed silent,
Trembling, fearing for you.

The skin beneath my hand
Is invisible in the dark; each inch
Touched, each scar traced,
Oh, hundreds of times . . .
In gray light, you will slip
From the circle of my arm, tread
Off across black fields;
My skin tingling in aftertouch,
I will wake and ask, where
Will the next mark lie?

Night Rook Watching

I stand in the wind
On the rock of Mt. Jefferson,
Watch ravens ride the currents,
Search for food in green folds.
Beyond, the town lies dwarfed and distant:
Stoplight, Main Street, Methodist church,
Courthouse. To the right a blue oval,
A tent-top, cross-marked in its center.

*

Walking Main Street at night, I hear
Six syllables, a wail.
Six more, another wail.
Within a block of the preacher's
Amplified voice, rhythmic at
Revival pitch, I turn back.
Fire and brimstone fall away
At my heels.

*

I retreat to a place between
Two white pillars. Count pickups
And the people in them; see headlights
Burn power lines white like ice.
Discovering the bell at my feet,
I have an urge to ring it—
Maybe in the middle of the night.
Now it is not yet 10:30.

*

Three hunters come, armed with
Dirt-filled jars and flashlights.
They strike quickly, tug gently, store
Their night-crawler prey:
Shirtless, boyish bodies
Silhouetted by streetlamps,
Southern boyish voices swearing
With the words of men. They move on,
Repeat the ceremony. I remain unseen.

*

I look to the shadow
Mt. Jefferson casts upon the sky,
Follow the line to its peak,
Remember standing there in sun.
Now I can think only
Of darkness and echo, of silence and sleep.
My eyes must close;
Light holds the scream of the rook.

Invisible to the Eye

Molly was maneuvering her way around the hors d'oeuvres table when she saw her. It was as if the champagne had suddenly worked backwards—draining all the taste and pleasure and color out of Molly's evening. She had not seen Alice Ann in years—not since high school graduation. She impulsively looked towards her husband for protection, but he was already seated with the string quartet ready to begin. She would listen to the concert from the piano bench. It was the perfect refuge in the crowded music room, for Molly was always at home at the piano. She could feel her hard-earned confidence fade as she glimpsed Alice Ann seated across the room. Two degrees and a career just were not enough protection against the past; she was still intimidated. She was still sorry. Her husband would be enraptured with his cello for the next hour and the baby was at home asleep; Molly had no one to remind her that she was an adult.

She pushed "Pomp and Circumstance" to the side, straightened her graduation gown, and adjusted the piano bench. She was waiting for Alice Ann's valedictory address to begin and wondering if her porcelain friend could pull it off without cracking. The sight of emaciated Alice Ann always disturbed her—just looking at the gaunt El Greco face on the boyish body repulsed her. It was all so distorted. She could remember Alice Ann's face full and almost happy. She could picture her at fourteen.

"Quit worrying, Alice Ann! My mom will get you home in time for your music lesson. She'll be right out." Alice Ann propped herself impatiently against the parked car while Molly amused herself drawing in the fender dust. She teasingly traced two pairs of initials on the chrome; one pair belonged to Alice Ann.

"Look at this, Alice Ann!"

"That's disgusting. I'm so fat!"

"What?"

"In the fender... look how big it makes me! Isn't that gross?"

"I was talking about the initials. You're not fat. I mean you're not skinny, but you're not fat. It's just the angle of the fender. Watch!" Molly knew how to control the image. She moved closer to the fender and adjusted her position until her whole head expanded and crowded out any reflection of her rival. It wasn't a very pretty picture, especially when she stuck out her tongue and started to laugh. Alice Ann

could not find anything so funny in the bloated image. It was real to her.

She stood solemn as a prophet at the commencement ceremony. She seemed secure enough in her bulky graduation robe, but Molly knew better. From the piano, Molly had a good view of the speaker on stage. She studied the creases of the voluminous dress and traced the skeletal lines underneath. Strange that in four years of gym classes no one had ever seen Alice Ann—fat or thin—undressed. There was a certain curiosity and cattiness in the other girls when it came to her. She was a mystery; she simply fascinated Molly. Was it really Alice Ann on stage shrouded inside of all that material? Could she find a voice big enough beneath all those covers?

It was not Molly's worry, so she settled herself on the piano bench and thumbed through the program disinterestedly. Her attention soon fixed itself on the back cover, for her name was there: Mary Josephine Hammond: Merit scholar. She tried to be annoyed that the school insisted on middle names, but to no avail. Her cheeks grew warmer and warmer as she rolled the accolade over her tongue. She liked to imagine her mother was reading it, her dad, too. In fact, she liked to imagine that everybody and his brother was reading the back of the program while Alice Ann gave her nasty little speech. Molly's face reddened lest anyone had read her mind along with the back cover.

Her facial expressions matched her mental gymnastics, for Molly could never stay still. She envied Alice Ann's self-control; she detested the stony inflexibility of her friend's sunken face; she rebelled against its stoic stillness, but she felt its pathos.

"Good morning, honored parents, teachers, and guests." The opening was executed flawlessly, in true Alice Annian fashion. Molly wasn't quite sure how, but she knew she would have started it all so very differently.

"Mary Alice—right? You sit in front of me in homeroom."

"My name is Alice *Ann*, and yes, I do remember you—Mary, better known as Molly, Hammond. Last name spelled with two m's. You were the one eating tuna fish in homeroom this morning."

"Oh! excuse me, Alice *Ann*. I should remember better. Looks like you're in every one of my classes—even orchestra."

Alice Ann's pursed mouth snapped open and shut as precisely as her monogrammed pocketbook. Her knee socks never unravelled down her chubby legs; her biology never got lost in her three-subject notebook, and her French grammar never erred in conjugations. Molly simply hated her; they became the best of friends. It was so important to have someone steady for standing in lines, eating lunch, just for feeling secure those first few months of high school. It was comfortable to have Alice Ann close, for sleep-overs and telephone calls—talking about teachers and school, clothes and diets late into the night; she never failed Molly.

"Come here, Alice Ann. You have to see this picture. Isn't it just gro-ss? Can you imagine someone really wearing that awful dress?" Molly was stretched across the

bed quite content with her own flannel pajamas and her friend's fleecy robe.

"Where did you get that stupid magazine?"

"A girl in the marching band lent me this one. There's a couple more in my suitcase."

"Figures, that's just the sort of thing to suit the marching band. I can't understand why you waste your time with those kids."

"Knock it off, Alice Ann. You're just jealous. You just want a tuba for *your* locker."

A disgusted Alice Ann picked up the magazine in retreat and forced a sigh to make it known she was not so easily humored. The competition was constant—grades, orchestra, looks. The only place the two girls weren't pitted against each other was on the marching field. Alice Ann would have no part in it.

The routine was set: Alice Ann would ignore Molly for awhile—giving all her attention to the magazine and the latest article on dieting. It would blow over by morning, as always. Molly arranged her head in the unfamiliar pillow and shut her eyes, hoping to hurry up the next day's truce. She heard Alice Ann snap off the light and hustle downstairs. The kitchen cabinets opened and shut while she searched for the cake left over from dinner. The clink of the milk bottles tingled through the sleeping house. Alice Ann was washing down her hurt with the chocolate cake and Molly knew it was her fault.

The girls comforted each other as dilemmas spilled like Cokes and malt balls at the lunch table. They were confidants. They were a couple. Alice Ann stuck to Molly like peanut butter to the roof of the mouth.

Nothing enlivened lunch like a pile of malt balls from the cafeteria counter. The girls saved such rare treats for special days: Friday, birthdays, game days, holidays. Molly usually found an excuse to buy them at least twice a week. Sitting at the lunch table, Alice Ann could fist just as many malt balls in her face as her competitor; however, Molly started popping them down at lunch and just kept right on going until the middle of French class—when the supply ran out. Alice Ann never chewed outside the cafeteria; she knew the rules and Alice Ann never opened her mouth in any fashion if it was against the rules.

The pencil-line lips moved precisely, predictably, rounding out each syllable of the speech and rolling it into the microphone. Molly found little to criticize thus far in the valedictory address. Perhaps it was a bit dry, void both of sentiment and expression. It was Alice Ann through and through.

"'Goodbye,' said the fox. 'And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.'"

Molly was stunned by the sudden change in tone; she felt half sick and angry, for *The Little Prince* was her favorite book, and Alice Ann had just broadcast one of its sweetest secrets. The only way that girl knew how to use sentiment was to exploit it. Molly figured that it was calculated, for Alice Ann had rolled all those sweet balls of emotion around in her mouth just long enough to make them sour. Molly turned from the piano bench and surveyed the row of caps and gowns. Nobody else

understood that the valedictorian was aiming at her—spitting the past in her face.

“Molly, what a lovely book! *The Little Prince*. What a clever birthday present—you even bought the French version.”

“I wanted it perfect. Read inside the cover!”

“September 27. Joy to Alice Ann on her sixteenth birthday. Always remember the fox’ secret: ‘What is essential is invisible to the eye.’”

The birthday girl never looked up. She wound the curly ribbon around her stubby fingers and smoothed the flowered paper in her lap. She slipped the card back into the carefully opened envelope and snapped some Kleenex from her monogrammed pocketbook. “Happy birthday, Alice Ann!” Molly rolled a malt ball across the table in her direction and proudly pulled a chocolate sheet cake from the brown shopping bag.

Lunch times really began to crumble, though, when the new orchestra director arrived. Alice Ann spent lunches practicing in the music room, and Molly ate her malt balls alone. Sustaining a conversation at the lunch table was nearly impossible after Alice Ann was cut from the woodwind ensemble. Molly gave up marching band just to hold one of those cherished chairs.

“What do you think about the mixer Friday night, huh?” Molly plopped herself breathlessly down on the cafeteria stool. “There should be plenty of guys. We sent invitations to all the nearby marching bands! You going to go?”

“What?”

“Alice Ann, are you listening to me? The posters are all over the place for Friday night!”

“What’s Friday night?”

“I just told you. Stop studying and talk to me. Come on, put away your French book. Here, have some grapes!”

“Oh! That’s disgusting! If you’re going to spit out the pits, at least put them in your napkin.”

“Pardon my vulgarity, your royal majesty, sovereign ruler of the lunch room, Queen Alice Ann. You know what your problem is? You eat too much cottage cheese! That’s all you eat anymore. You don’t need to lose more weight, you look good. Why don’t you come Friday night!”

“I don’t have any time, with the French test on Wednesday. I’ll probably flunk it.”

“It’s only a quiz! You’ve never flunked a test in your life.”

“That music project is due soon, and you know how that teacher hates me. You just wouldn’t know, being one of his favorites, Molly Hammond. Have you ever noticed how he calls on me last? Nobody likes me—even you get annoyed now.”

Molly squirted a grape at Alice Ann for comic relief. She hardly knew what approach to use, for she’d tried just about every one of them these last few weeks—during the lastest diet. Sympathy? Empathy? She’d opt for sarcasm this time.

“Alright, Alice Ann. Have it your way! We all hate you! The French teacher gives you A’s to be vicious. And I suppose the music teacher exempts you from exams to

be spiteful. I eat with you because you're a priss and I enjoy torturing myself. God, you're so paranoid!" Molly swept the French grammar book off the table for effect. Alice Ann grabbed her pocketbook and ran to the lavatory in a huff. The malt balls bounced all over the floor.

The stall door was locked, so Molly leaned against the sink and waited.

"Alice Ann?"

"Go away!"

"Alizzann, I'm sorry. Here, have the rest of my malt balls. I'll slide them under the door. You know I was only kidding."

"You were not, Molly. That's exactly what you and everybody else thinks—I'm a priss. You don't like me at all."

"You're my best friend! Why are you doing this to me? Why are you doing this to yourself? Are you sick or something? Alice Ann, you answer me, are you okay?" She couldn't answer because she was getting sick.

Molly deserted her post only to take it up a few months later. She really didn't know why Alice Ann would have wanted her to stay overnight. They could hardly play at being fourteen year old buddies again. Stretched across her friend's bed, Molly sadly remembered feeling comfortable there. Things were so different now. Molly had abandoned any thoughts of bringing magazines and packed her French book instead. That way, if she couldn't hit upon a subject agreeable to Alice Ann, they'd quiz each other in grammar. Exams and graduation were only two weeks away.

Molly propped her French book on the pillow and pounded the irregular verbs into her brain. Alice Ann was probably doing the same thing in the bathtub. She had carried the book in with her, but what was taking her so long?

"What are you doing in there? You've been in that tub for ages." The girl began to splash around, but made no reply. Molly hardly expected to be let inside, but she at least wanted an answer.

"Alice Ann!" The faucet started to run. Alice Ann wouldn't have to answer the questions if she didn't hear them. "What's going on? Are you looking at yourself or something? The faucet hardly makes for a very flattering mirror." The water stirred in assent.

"Oh, please talk to me."

Normally, Molly would have just counted up all Alice Ann's shining qualities—invisible to the eye—and attributed her moodiness to the diet or the coming exams. She'd say to herself, "Alice Ann is always like this before an exam, test, quiz, holiday, concert. She isn't at all well, you know. She's just too thin." Well, whose fault was it if she didn't eat, sleep, or have any friends? No! Molly was not going to let it blow over this time. She waited in the hallway for Alice Ann to unlock the door and show herself.

She stepped from the steamy room, wrapped tight in towels with her wet hair wound in terry cloth. There was nothing to soften her appearance—no curls, no clothes. The cheeks sucked in and the eyes pushed out. The forehead seemed to

tower over her hard, narrow features. Standing side by side in the hallway, it was hardly a fair match. Molly's developed body simply overpowered the childish frame beside her. She was the same height, but seemed twice the size and age of Alice Ann. Molly couldn't very well confront her in this position; besides, she couldn't stomach the pencil arms and legs jutting from the towel. She let Alice Ann escape and waited for her to finish dressing.

Not until Alice Ann was securely clad in her pajamas did Molly risk entering the room; she found her huddled on the bed intent on the French book. Her back was against the wall and her fingers were clasped around her legs; she could almost circle that hand around her calf.

"Is something wrong, Alice Ann? You did invite me, didn't you? Why this silent torture? *Say something, dammit!*" She tucked her head against her knees. The knee caps fit well into her eye sockets while her palms pressed her ears airtight.

"For God's sake grow up, Alice Ann. Stop acting like some ten year old. I'm tired of treating you like a baby like everyone else does. You look just terrible. You're so skinny it's nauseating. You don't even look like a girl! You should hear what they say behind your back in gym class! What are you embarrassed about? Do you see yourself, Alice Ann? Did you see yourself in the faucet? Did you see yourself in the bathroom mirror? Do you think that's pretty?"

She unplugged her eyes and ears. "No! I don't! I'm very fat and ugly and very stupid. You hate me, Molly, like all the others. You're just like all the others. Leave me alone."

Molly didn't know how to apologize. She wrapped her arms tight around that flannel bundle. She wanted to wind her arms about that pole-like body—once, twice, maybe even three times around. She had to be careful not to squeeze as hard as she wanted.

"Don't. Just leave me alone. You don't need me, Molly."

There would be no truce tomorrow. This time it was for good; Alice Ann did not want her. Or if she did, she certainly had a strange way of saying so. Molly freed her arm; she needed it to wipe her nose. Alice Ann had her parents and teachers to cater to her, but they were all so afraid of her. There were even rumors of a psychiatrist. She could do without Molly, and Molly could surely do without her.

The graduation address seemed never-ending. Molly wondered if she might escape to the restroom unnoticed. When the valedictorian began the final round of thank you's, Molly knew she wouldn't be on the list. She wanted to protest! She wanted to bang that piano for all it was worth and pound out "The Star-Spangled Banner" right over Alice Ann's speech. She waited. No sooner had Alice Ann rolled out her last word, then Molly launched into the school song and brought the class to its feet. Between the singing and the piano accompaniment there was no room for applause. There was no room for Alice Ann. It was just an accident in timing on Molly's part. Nobody could incriminate her, and nobody could appreciate just how vicious it really was—it was invisible to the eye. Only Alice Ann could feel it. Molly was ashamed. She put her head down on the piano and avoided her friend's

betrayed face.

She started up from the piano and discovered it was only the violin calling to the cello. She was forever listening for babies in the night now that she had one of her own. It was getting late and Molly worried about the babysitter. Judging from the look on her husband's face, all was going well. The concert was drawing to a close, and Molly couldn't remember one piece they'd played. At least Alice Ann seemed to be enjoying herself across the room. She was really lovely. Her face was full again, and the stone had melted back into flesh. She even smiled at the elbows and whispers of her middle-aged escort. Molly could almost remember why she had admired her so.

The cello played the last melody of the evening and Molly proudly watched her husband bow with the rest of the quartet. The clapping was polite, though sincere. Molly stood up with the rest of the room and looked straight at Alice Ann. She applauded as hard as she could.

Thermal

I. THE GAZER

First off I'll have you know the girl was at fault.
Running around on the boardwalk like that, as if
it were a field of lilies. *Keep on Walk. Danger.*
Thermal Area, right there big as day. Eleven
years old, couldn't she read? Couldn't she see
the pools bubbling away? Pretty as pennies,
smelling like wet matches. Yes, the child knew.

They call me the Geyser Gazer. I time eruptions,
observe fluctuations in currents, take temperatures.
The geysers are kind of a family for me,
you see, and I sort of watch over them.
I was standing on the lip of Crested Pool, dipping in
with a thermometer on the end of a bamboo pole that day.
All of a sudden from somewhere behind me
a woman was screaming, pointing into Morning Glory.
The look in her eyes was like ones I've seen on road kills.
The child was already boiled by then:
two hundred degrees Fahrenheit at the surface,
getting hotter farther down. She'd been running,
of course—ran right off the boardwalk and in.
The woman kept screaming, and the man
just stood around with his hands in his pockets.
The girl was swirling in the bottom like a strawberry
in a blender. We watched her slip out of sight.

The newspapers played it up, some even said
they should put cages around the pools—
nearly scared me to death. Poor Glory:
prettier than the flower. Yellow algae at the lip

like gold, then green, then blue at the bottom,
blue like the blood in veins that never sees air.
I've watched it, too hot to touch, these years.

They threw in some soap the next day
and some bones floated up. I couldn't help giggling.
It would be a stormy day, low clouds
hanging down close, tinged at the bottom
with something like iodine.
My feet felt little tremblings deep beneath the earth.
I heard a grizzly far off, killing something.
Somehow I knew Glory was safe. I felt like a mother then,
and cried only at the sight, in Glory's surface,
of my own exploding, reforming, exploding face.

II. THE MOURNER

The death of watching her die now over,
this day returns another years ago,
spent writhing in a bed of painful white:
only seconds old, impossibly sentient,
she lay on my breast watching me
with borrowed eyes, staring at me
as at a coiled and striking snake,
inchworming away to the edge of the bed
and a three-foot drop. Unmindful
of my emptiness, still wet with my blood,
she kept silent and breathed her first cold breath.

She has made a life, and my death, of leaving me.

III. THE VOYAGER

Softly
 softly down through mother-light
 I float, liquid love lukewarmly bathing
 skin outside and inside me—first
 my eyes, then inward, liver
 and lights,
 my heart still pumping
 browning blood:

I descend

softly,
 boldly, growing
 younger, fetal, the bones of my knees
 rising
 to touch my skull's brow,
 rising, rising so that I am upside-down
 and am, though falling,

rising:

and now older,
 older, secretly old
 like light from a distant sun, old
 like song, old,
 becoming ancient:

my eyes

shed their ripened grapeskins
 and see the light from below me
 dwarfing the light from above,
 and I swim

crookedly downward,

sliding, slipping
 this way and that, as through
 concentric circles of a periwinkle shell,
 my hair and skin and muscles and gristle
 falling away,

falling away in shreds

like my mother's ribbons:

softly

I listen to her voice,

her cries at first a song,

a siren,

then pathetic beautiful snufflings:

her love for me is blue,

the deep blue

of hearts of oceans:

my former mother's cries

are air-bound, sadly insoluble

in these waters, helpless to ride

the sucking currents down,

to follow,

to return with me to the warmth,

here where algae yellow

softens

into green, into deepening blue:

I have never been more awake:

I am warm,

I swim,

stroke with nonexistent arms:

here, at last, love-heat

comes unbidden to the surface:

to my

invisible heart it comes,

from fluid origin-fires of virgins.

IV. THE PRESENCE

The day has ended; the creatures of earth
rise from their places of hiding
to partake of the peace of darkness:
my peace, that seeps up
from pits fraught with heat,
from cool spaces between leaning stones,
from faintly singing breaths of trees;
here in the quiet of evening, of which
I am a part, I begin the circle of healing.

Their spirals have brought them here:
living and dying ceased, becoming
brought to an end, they accept my offer of stillness
and are nourished; in the blue shade of my sight
they find rest. I expand outward, upward
to the sky, softening the blackness with my haze:
my voice pours forth from the river,
rings out from the rings of trees,
fills the horizon with its strengthening lowing:
I take for myself the heat of the earth,
and of the sun,
and of these rumbling hearts: I take it all in,
gather unto myself the power of a God,
the strength required for the task ahead—
teaching daughters to live, and mothers to be daughters.

Weekend in Madrid

I hate being married; I really do. I know John to the core. After a mere four years, I know him so well that I sicken of him. And he sickens of me, too, though he won't admit it. And so, because of our mutual boredom, we have come to a cocktail party tonight in an effort to break that boredom that John claims only I feel, but I know he's lying. I've lived with him every single day for four years, so I should know. And because the fool *won't* admit it, I've somehow managed to separate myself from him among the groups of tipsy people standing around the room in the green-carpeted murk. He won't admit he's bored with me, so I'll just take the hint and give him exactly what he really wants: a chance to get away from me and talk to some new people. That's what I'm trying to do at the moment, too. I drift behind and between so many tight conversational circles that I begin to wonder if I was stupid to separate myself quite so abruptly from him—

What the hell is that girl laughing at over there? She's been laughing so hard for the last ten minutes that I can hardly hear myself think. She's drunk out of *her* mind, and I can see why; she's only carrying three empty glasses. And what does she think she is, anyway, a chorus girl? There are so many sequins on that dress that when she laughs, the woman looks like a fish flashing in the sunlight. Look how she's laughing so hard that the mascara and eyeliner run in black streaks down her face. What a fool she's making of herself! That blonde guy she's with looks embarrassed. My *God!* I think she just dropped one of her glasses on the guy's foot, but I can't quite see. Surely she's not his date. (*Date.* That's a word I haven't used in a while.) Maybe I'll be kind and go bail him out. Make way, you snotty, tight little circles. I wonder if John sees me moving toward this victimized blonde man. "Sara, what the hell are you doing?" If he sees me, that's exactly what he's thinking—I guarantee it. After four years, I can absolutely guarantee it. That poor bored liar.

I'd better hurry; that streaky floozy is getting drunker by the second. Every time she laughs, she reaches out and grabs the blonde man's arm in an effort both to attempt a clumsy pass and to support herself. Poor guy can't even manage a smile at her anymore. He just glances nervously at her and darts his eyes around the room, as if he were looking around for the nearest trash can to stuff her in. Don't worry, honey, I'm on my way. As I enter his general vicinity, he spots me approaching with what I think is a look of relief and anticipation. (Can you imagine it? I actually do

not know what he is thinking!) At this point, Miss Streaked-and-Sequined is practically doubled over the blonde young man's arm like a five-and-a-half-foot damp towel. He hands her to another drunk nearby. Neither she nor the drunk to which she is handed seems to notice the difference. The coast is clear. I walk brashly up to him and say hello. He smiles (yes, I think it is relief), and says hi to me. Oh my God—dimples. Under ordinary conditions, dimples would be too much for me, but I decide to stick around and make the best of it, anyway. Does John see me, I wonder? I smile and laugh lightheartedly in response to the blonde's dimples. Too bad my laugh sounds like a sheepdog with bronchitis. Does John see? "Sara, you flirtatious bitch!" I'm sure he'd like to come right over here, grab me by the arm, and march me out the door, if he simply weren't so disgusted with me. He's too disgusted with me to come over here. I know John, and I know he's disgusted.

Mr. Dimples smiles again, asks my name and whether or not I'd like another drink. I say "Samantha" and "yes." "Why the hell do you always try to pretend to be someone that you're not, Sara?" Why does John always try to order another person's life when he shouldn't? Ah, here is my young man, promptly returned with two glasses of champagne. Is he out to impress me with his punctuality or something? If so, he need not take the trouble; his big, brown eyes have already impressed me. They're dark and deep and so subtle that I simply dive into them and am lost. John doesn't have eyes like that; his are dull grey like a weathered piece of aluminum. Not that his personality is like that, of course. I admit I can remember a couple of occasions over the past four years when he's shown a spark of life. But he just doesn't have deep, brown eyes like Mr. Dimples. And yes, John, I know what you would say: "You always judge people solely on their looks, Sara. Can't you stop being so superficial?" But I guess I'm not too superficial if I married you in spite of your pathetic physique, am I, John?

Oh, damn! Mr. Dimples has been talking to me for the last five minutes, and I haven't been listening to a word. Now he's asking me a question, and I don't understand what it's—what's he pointing to? Something above and behind me—I turn—a moosehead. A moosehead? Oh, yes, I reply, it's a nice-looking moosehead. Oh no, that's not what he was talking about! Have I ever seen a live moose? that's it. No, I haven't; have you? (I think this guy got two drinks for himself when he went to get mine.) Oh, he says he's seen a live moose; he says he goes hunting with the guy who's throwing this party. What?! He's hunted moose?! Somehow I can't picture anyone with such dimples hunting moose, but I suppose I shouldn't say that, should I? I'll just take another sip of champagne and say I don't know the host. Mr. Dimples can't believe I don't know the host, and his big eyes widen in surprise. I know just what John would say to me if he knew that I love the way Mr. Dimples' eyes widen in surprise: "Damn it, Sara, I can't believe the way you make eyes and throw yourself at every man in sight when you're drunk." Drunk?! I am *not* drunk, John, you ass—oh, Mr. Dimples is pointing out the host to me. From what I can make out of the man's face and build, it was a considerable act of narcissism for him to display his fine moosehead, and I think I just said as much, because Mr. Dimples

is laughing his head off and exclaiming at how witty I am. Does he really think I'm witty? He must; there he goes to get me another drink. Am I witty? John would say, "Only when you're drunk, Sara." See? He doesn't even have to be here to say it, because I know that's exactly what he would say.

When is Mr. Dimples going to get back with that drink? Ah, yes, I can see him coming through the crowd now. That was fast, and so is that streaked mess of a woman who's managed to latch onto his arm again. Great! So here he comes back to me carrying two glasses of champagne and one drunken slut. "Well, isn't that what you're acting like right now, Sara?" Dammit, John, that's a lie! Now he's just being vicious; that's exactly what he would say in one of his vicious moods. In response, I glare in John's direction. I may not be able to see him in the room, but after living with him for four years, I can sense his presence, believe me. I glare in the direction in which I can sense John's presence.

Mr. Dimples is meanwhile trying to hand me my half-spilled drink with the arm on which Miss Long-Gone Mascara is hanging. Mr. Dimples doesn't look too dimply now, does he? *Dimply*. That's a funny word. Oh my God, am I *giggling*? Don't look now, but Miss Long-Gone's face is grimacing with anger. Does that drunken bitch think I'm laughing at her? Well, she need not trouble herself about that; I'm *not* laughing at her, though God knows I have plenty reason to. Oh *no*! She's roaring now! I can't believe I said that. The only thing standing between me and total destruction now is Mr. Dimples' restraining grasp on Miss Long-Gone. I can't believe I was giggling in the first place. I guess I must be a little tipsy. "Tipsy?! What do you mean, 'tipsy,' Sara?! That's your tenth!" No John, it's my eleventh. And just to show you that I know exactly what you're thinking, I'll drink it all in one wallop. There. And I laugh in triumph over you. Ha, ha, John! Oh no, Miss Long-Gone is lowering her tangled mess of dyed stringiness and charging at me like a Spanish bull! She must have thought I was laughing at—oh!

I wonder if Mr. Dimples knows how uncomfortable it is to have a moosehead ground horns-first into one's shoulders. Oh, it hurts, and the room is falling upwards. I can see all the people gathering with gawking faces. Why do they have to crowd around? To watch me smell the carpet? But no—the floor is stone, it seems, and cold. I don't understand it. "Sara, you idiot—" Oh, shut up John! You have no right to be nasty to me. After all, how many of them are just as tipsy as I? Those asses. I feel like jumping up and screaming at the—oh my head. I will—I'll give them a piece of my mind. I'm doing it. I'm getting up. Where am I? I'll stand, I will, I did, I'm standing. Where am I?

They're still there, that silent, gawking crowd. They're so dark. Is it this light or have their complexions changed? I'm cold, cold. The wind is whipping over the stones like icy arrows. They're all quiet; they're all watching me in the twilight. I don't care. I'll speak to them anyway. Those asses.

"You all think I'm a lush, don't you?" My voice is quieter than I had expected. Oh my head. "—and a flirt, too. You all think that, don't you?" What's that? A dark shape walks away from me into the motionless crowd. I hear its hooves against the

pavement, but it is a quiet sound, as if it were being muffled and swept away by the wind. I didn't notice that thing before it moved; I won't notice it now.

"I bet you think my husband is embarrassed, that he feels—" Horns! It has horns. I see the silhouette of them moving away through the crowd. I follow the vague shape with my eyes and suddenly I can make out that this open space is all paved, and there's a square of high, ornate buildings all around me. The windows above the ground have iron-railed balconies. Even in this dim light, I can make out people on the nearest one leaning on the rail, looking at me. People are on all the balconies looking at me! Silent and motionless. Sometimes, close to me, the surface of someone's eye flashes in the half-light. Don't they feel this wind? They just stand and gape, and let their hair fly over their faces. They *are* dark! Their eyes and skin and hair—all dark. Are they foreign? Spanish? I know that language. I'll still talk.

"*Escúchenme Uds.*!" Silence. They all stare at me as before. "*Creen que no me he portado bien, esto dará a mi marido verguenza, no?*" They stare. "*Pero a mi no me importa el que dirán, entienden Uds.?*" Silence. What, are they brainless? Don't they understand?

"No, they don't." Is that me? Did someone speak?

"*Escúchenme . . .*" No, there seems to be no understanding or response in them. Look! A part of the crowd shifts. No, no, they're being pushed aside. The cold sinks darts into my legs. If it's that horned thing I can't run. A hand (whose owner I cannot make out) grabs my shoulder.

"No, they don't," says the gruff, young voice of a brown-skinned old man wearing nothing but a filthy loincloth. His chest is so caked with dirt, he must have rubbed it on deliberately as mud and let it dry there. He chips off tiny pieces of it with his fingers as he says to me in his rumbling voice, "They don't, they never do." After he speaks, his face seems to contract, falling into deep brown wrinkles. But his eyes are blue, like two bright amoebic stars.

He leads me down a grassy slope. The light is so bright I think I should not be able to open my eyes, but I do. At a little distance, where the ground is flatter, a small pond reflects the sun so that it looks like an oval sheet of light lying in the grass. I immediately want to run down and touch the water, but the old man holds me back as if I were a naughty child. After what seems a long time, we arrive at the edge of the pool. The water is clear and the bottom of the pond paved with cement. I'm trying to shake off the old man's filthy hand. Does he have insects, I wonder? I feel a tingling sensation spreading along my arm where his hand clutches it. I shake it off.

Across the pond, something flashes, black and somewhat triangular, with one long, sloping side. Silver lines run all along its edges. A slide?—something children would play on. I wade into the water in its direction.

"I wouldn't do that," says the interpreter, in an angry voice. He speaks to me as if I were an idiot, or a child. I turn away from him. In the grass, not far away, a shadow suggests the shape of a boat. I'm not sure, though, because it's teeming with insects.

"My parents were hungry," says the interpreter, in a softer, almost apologetic voice, "so they wanted to eat me." I speak, too, but still am turned away, watching the black and silver thing.

"A spider almost as high as my knee lived across the street. One day it crossed and chased me back and forth across the front porch."

"—because I couldn't open the window, and they and my brothers were hungry."

"—back and forth, again and again. Finally it chased me to the edge of the porch, clicking and clicking ..."

"So they sharpened our best butcher's knife, to carve off the good parts."

"It began to climb my leg, but before it got to my mid-thigh ..."

"I was angry and began to starve myself ..."

"—I kicked up my leg and flung it over the porch rail—"

"—until there was nothing left worth carving."

"—right into the garden pool."

"They spat and cursed, and told me to go to the devil."

"It struggled on its back in the water, its legs waving like furry spindles, clicking."

"They stripped me and threw me out."

"After its legs folded, the fish came and picked it to bits."

I don't even need to row, for the boat moves by itself. I hear the interpreter on the shore behind me, mumbling in a monotone. I look only at the black and silver curve, which comes closer and closer, but is no more distinct. I hear the interpreter's chant. The sun, brighter now, is a shifting lattice on the paved bottom. The water is clear and deep. I drop a fish hook into the water and watch it spin and sink, spin and sink slowly, my chin resting on the edge of the boat. Slashing like a blade as it sinks silver down, down. Is there no bottom?

Only when I breathe bubbles do I know that my face has touched the water. Opening my mouth, I drink a little. As I drink, the hook descends, a tiny star falling, and I swim. The water is like air, only thicker and sweeter. The side of the pool is rough and steep; I want to touch the lattice, but every time I try, it lifts up and rides over my fingers.

A black whip slips through the water at the other side of the pool. I swim for the edge. If I could swim faster, my hair would look like black whips. It's closer now—I thought it was a whip, but its scales glint like a fish's, except they are smaller and blacker, and even shinier. The interpreter pulls me onto the grass. I feel a sharp coldness in my fingers, like icicles sliding under my nails. The snake hangs tensely from the skin between my thumb and forefinger. Its tiny black eyes are fixed on me: I sense them, but I'm not sure, its scales blind me so. Up my arm seeps the coldness; the skin grows greyer, I'm sure, in this light—oozing into my shoulder. I know the snake is looking at me. The coldness trickles gently into my cheek. I look straight at the sun; I stare at the sun. After a time, transparent worms and bubbles begin to writhe around inside it. Coldness clutches at my jaw. The interpreter pushes me to the ground. His head with its wisps looms black against the sun, worms and bubbles.

The sun darkens and I am cold to the waist. The ground shakes. People are running down the slope to the pond, and their voices are angry. The snake has wrapped itself around my forearm. It is watching me. I watch the worms in the sun. The interpreter slaps my face back and forth, and the ground shudders. Their feet are heavy. They sound angry. Back and forth—I see a slope, I see the pond—one and the other, back and forth. Heavy like a herd of animals? The sky dims and the snake watches me. Slope and pond, back and forth. They seem so angry. Now it's like ice-splinters slicing into my thighs. Maybe it's horses. The sky dims and dims. Their voices so deep, their feet so heavy. Maybe it's horses.

Announcements

The 1982 William Blackburn Literary Festival is as follows: Carolyn Forché (March 22), Galway Kinnell (March 29), Reynolds Price (March 31), James Applewhite (April 5), and Toni Morrison (April 7). *The Archive* wishes to thank Ella Fountain Pratt, director of the Office of Cultural Affairs, for her help in scheduling the events.

The Archive wishes to thank the Duke University Institute of the Arts (James Applewhite, chairman) and the Duke University Stores for their support of the reading by the poet Charles Wright in February.

The Newman Ivey White Award for Literature is again being presented to the Duke undergraduates with the best samples of poetry and fiction in *The Archive*. The judges are selected from the University community by the management of the Gothic Bookshop. The names of the judges may not be made public. The prize consists of a \$50 gift certificate to be used at any of the Duke University Stores.

The winners of the Newman Ivey White Awards for this issue are Donna Jackson for "Harvest of the First Child" and Sharon Funderburk for "Pond Fishing."

Friends of The Archive

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Jerry Eidenier
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and other anonymous patrons.

Notes on Contributors

Timothy Beeker is a senior chemistry major from California. His heroes are Hamlet, Cyrano de Bergerac and John Merrick.

Cynthia Camlin is a senior English and art major from Virginia.

David Dubow is a senior computer science major whose hobbies are backpacking, photography, and ambulance work. He is from Westport, Connecticut.

Sharon Funderburk is from Union County, North Carolina.

Claudia Futter is a senior in Trinity College, studying economics and public policy.

Kitty Harmon is a Trinity senior whose photograph was taken during a recent trip to Morocco.

Julie Hofmann is a senior English major eagerly awaiting graduation.

Raisin Horn works in the reference department of Perkins Library. She holds an M.A. in creative writing from Hollins College.

Donna Jackson is a senior from Annapolis, Maryland, studying creative writing and photography.

Malcolm MacDougall is a Trinity junior who is interested in film production.

Joseph Markwordt's photograph *Reflections* was taken in a dark room with only the light from a window and a television set. *Out of Darkness, into Light* is a study of contrast and texture, and of fifteen-month-old Barry.

Kevin Nance is a senior in Trinity College. The idea for his poem "Thermal" came from a summer visit to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming.

Marion Salinger is the Coordinator of International Studies at Duke, and works with other colleges, universities and public schools in the southeast in the teaching of international studies.

Kim Still is a recent graduate of Duke whose only definite future plan is to continue writing.

Jenny Warburg is a December 1981 graduate of Duke whose main interest is documentary photography.

Katherine Whitney is an undergraduate majoring in art history, with a strong interest in portrait photography.





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